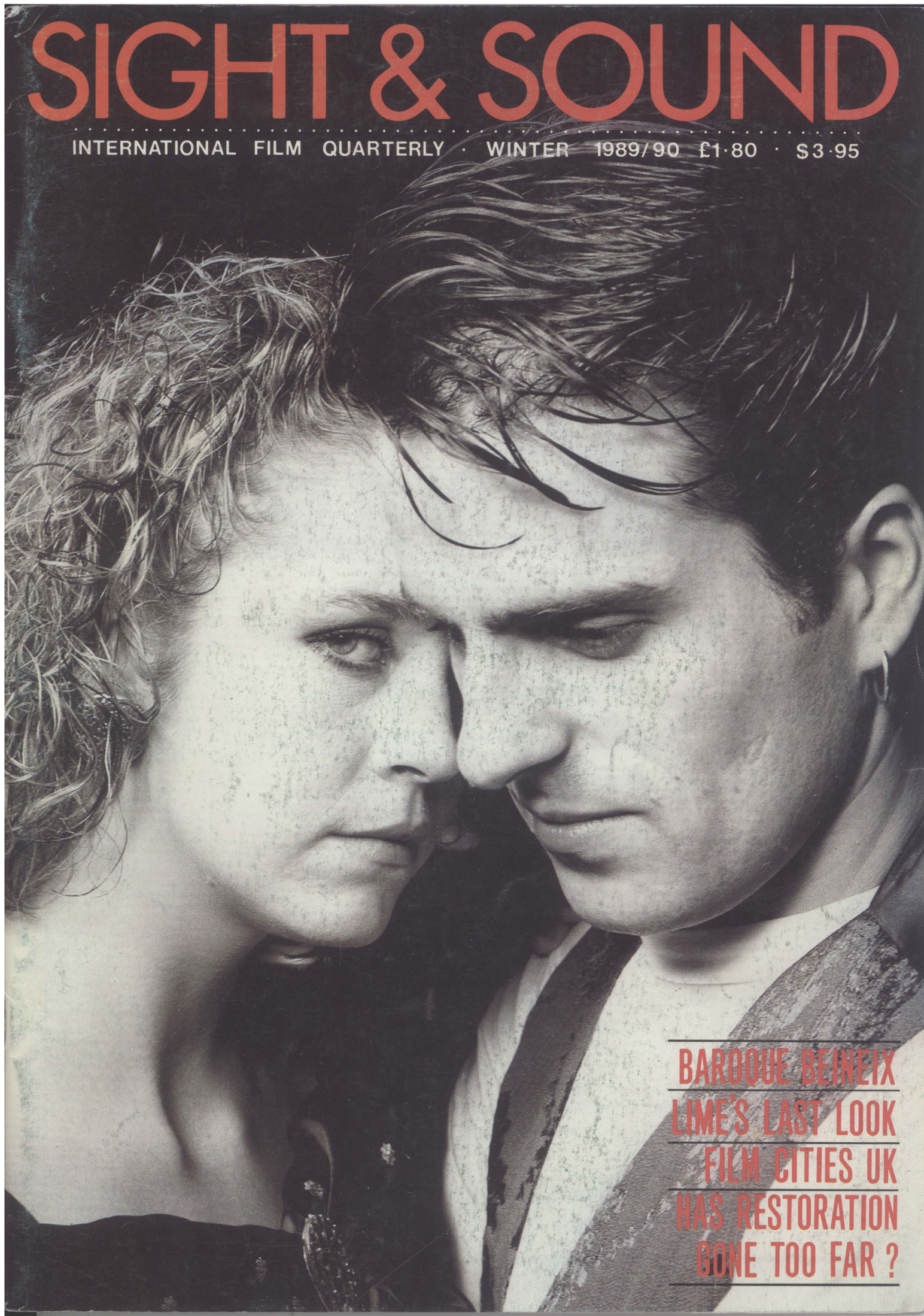


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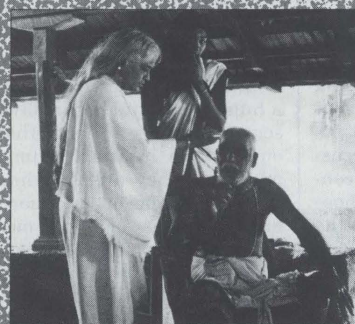
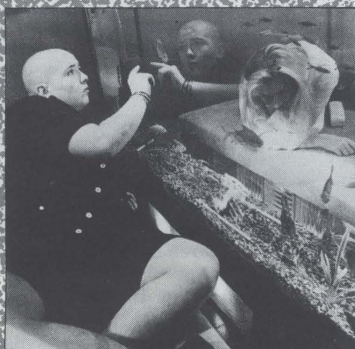
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On the cover: 'Dancin' Thru the Dark', Claire Hackett and Con O'Neill.
Photo: John Stoddard.

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A SOLDIER'S CRUSADE

A sensational Japanese documentary: 'The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On'

The 70-year-old Kenzo Okuzaki is serving a sentence of twelve years' hard labour for attempted murder. He does not chafe at the confinement but accepts it philosophically: 'Outside prison I would have to fend for myself.' But then, this is not his first brush with the law. Back in 1969 he made the headlines in Japan for having fired four pachinko balls at Emperor Hirohito as he stood on the palace balcony, accusing the Emperor of war crimes as he did so.

Okuzaki is a bit of a maverick, the self-styled 'impartial soldier' of the 'Divine Crusade' or 'Shingun', a one-man campaigner who, when he is not doing time, tours Japan railing against the 'Showa', the reign of Hirohito who, he believes, must be held responsible for crimes committed during the Second World War. Hirohito's death has not altered Okuzaki's determination: 'Even if the whole Japanese nation were to praise Hirohito, the fact that he is a serious criminal will remain unchanged before God and God's law.'

Okuzaki served during the war with the 36th Independent Engineering Corps in New Guinea. This was a doomed expedition and one of the bloodier episodes in the Pacific campaign. Soldiers on the island scattered into the jungle and most of them died of malaria or starvation, or both. Of more than a thousand in Okuzaki's corps only about thirty survived, so Okuzaki can count himself lucky.

But he saw his fellow soldiers die and the experience has scarred him for life. He starts to visit the survivors of the campaign and the relatives of those who died. He is particularly moved by an encounter with the mother of a comrade whom he had buried himself. During these investigations he discovers that a bizarre and apparently illegal shooting incident took place when two soldiers were executed for desertion more than three weeks after the war had ended.

Okuzaki is determined to discover why they were really shot. He presses Sergeant Yamada, the only survivor from the squadron, who admits that the officers were told to shoot the soldiers, who were then reported killed in action. Yamada explains that privates were killed in order for officers to survive, and that lots were drawn at regimental HQ.



The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On: Kenzo Okuzaki.

It becomes clear that cannibalism was carried out on quite a wide scale, with some witnesses alleging that private soldiers were killed and eaten and others that no Japanese soldiers were killed and that a distinction was maintained between 'white and black pork'. Not surprisingly, Okuzaki is extremely disturbed by this discovery. The horror of cannibalism and the revulsion he feels on religious grounds—'forty years after the end of the war their souls are not sleeping, they return to visit us'—these emotions combine with his single-minded campaign against the criminal Emperor.

However, although the revelation that cannibalism took place in New Guinea is shocking, it should not, perhaps, come as a total surprise. Far from being a purely ritual practice, it is known to occur in extreme conditions. Indeed, only eighteen months ago *Le Monde* printed an admission by some Vietnamese boat people that they owed their survival to cannibalism. What gives *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* its impact is that it is the portrait of an individual who not only continues to be traumatised by his wartime experiences, but because of them is marginalised and criminalised. Okuzaki's experience is tantamount to a refusal to participate in the postwar consensus, so that it is not just the Emperor who is challenged but Japanese society itself.

This means that, in addition to the gruesome tale it has to tell, *The Emperor's Naked Army* becomes a film document as much of interest for its chequered production history as for the story it recounts. It was produced by Shisso films, a company which

appears to specialise in physically shocking material (the 'self-liberation of a spastic person' or the filming of childbirth in 'real time'). The line between their taboo-breaking practices and pornography is a fine one, but in *The Emperor's Naked Army* their willingness to transgress takes on a clear political dimension.

The film-makers Shohei Imamura and Kazuo Hara sought out Okuzaki and constructed the film to mirror his—and their—process of discovery and reconstruction. They also had considerable difficulties to surmount, with the confiscation of footage shot in New Guinea and Okuzaki's further imprisonment. The film was more than five years in the making and was refused by all mainstream Japanese distributors. It has nevertheless touched a chord in Japan where it ran to packed houses for over a year.

One reason for its success, beyond the alternative version of history that it proposes, is undoubtedly that Okuzaki comes across as a man of such evident sincerity and humility. He is a genuine enquirer after truth rather than a publicity-seeking sensationalist, and thus helps to place the Japanese army in a quite different light from that in which we—and no doubt its members—have been accustomed to view it. It is the confusion and humanity of those involved which strikes the viewer. These were private soldiers or NCOS dumped in an alien environment in which the objectives of the war they were fighting entirely disappeared in their immediate struggle for survival.

This is not a view of Japanese

activities in the Second World War which is popular in the West and it would be fascinating to see, if *The Emperor's Naked Army* were distributed in the UK, whether it would arouse sympathy or cause outrage. As a sympathetic portrait of an unwilling soldier, as a different picture of Japanese society and, indeed, for the alternative version of the war which it proposes, *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* deserves to be widely seen in Britain, and it is to be hoped that some enterprising distributor will seize the opportunity to acquire it.

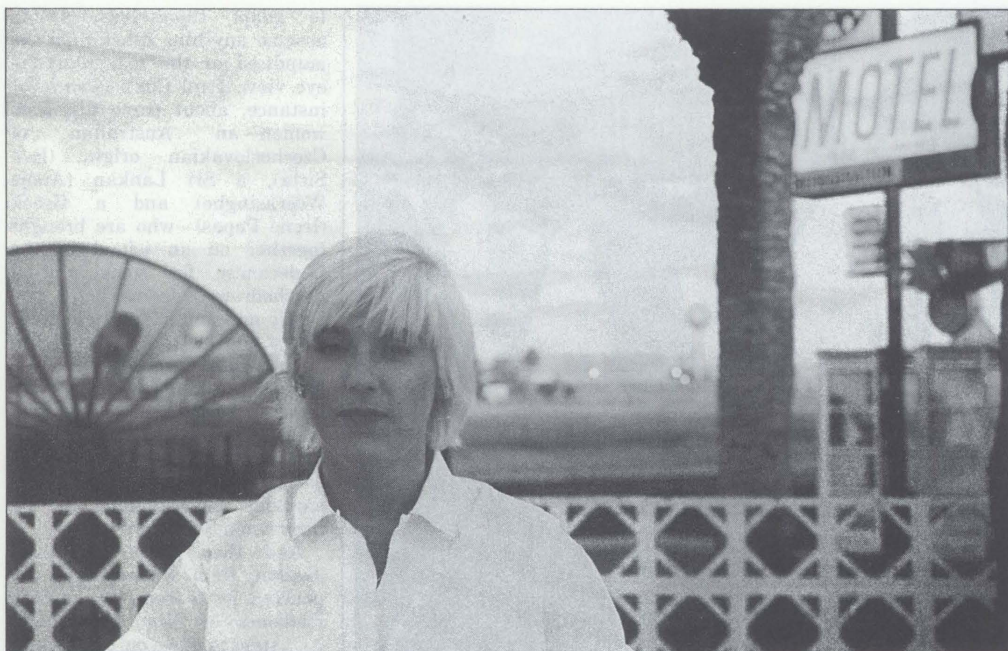
JILL FORBES

TORONTO

Eccentric Americans

Each year, Toronto's Festival of Festivals congratulates itself on its audiences, and its audiences on their perspicacity and staying power. And no wonder. This is a crowd-pulling festival, attracting over its ten days of screenings attendances reckoned at a remarkable 250,000.

It's done by a system of selling not tickets but passes, ranging from a very grand one admitting its holder to all festival treats to a humbler one taking in daytime screenings only. The method is one for the insatiable filmgoer; and there they are, standing in 100-yard queues at mid-morning and for films of very modest box-office potential. Is this, one wonders, the familiar festival lunacy, which has people fighting to get in to films they wouldn't cross the street to see at an ordinary cinema? Apparently not. Toronto, I'm assured, is a filmgoing city, in a way that

Christian Blackwood's *Motel*.

London, for instance, certainly is not.

Critics and buyers have to queue with the rest, unless they can catch a film at a press show. This has its annoyances, and Toronto may eventually have to temper its first come, first served democracy to take account of the difficulties it causes for the professionals. Meanwhile, it's salutary for cloistered critics to meet the real world. If, that is, this is quite the real world. I come across one of the most insatiable, a middle-aged man out to crack a record of films seen in a day. It is about lunchtime; he's on his third film, with four more to go, and visibly wilting. A pointless challenge. Many people in the queues have clearly taken time off for the festival, and although most overheard conversations seem to involve warnings about films on no account to be seen, there's a sense of holiday.

Toronto's Critics' Prize went, almost by right, to *Jesus of Montreal*. The award by popular vote, the prize from the queues, was less predictable. In the teeth of competition from the massed ranks of features, it went to a first film and a documentary, Michael Moore's *Roger and Me*. Roger is Roger Smith, president of General Motors. Moore's purpose, for much of the film, is to catch up with the elusive tycoon to give him a piece of his mind about the closing of plants in Flint, Michigan, General Motors' home town. To this end, Moore and his crew keep popping up at yacht clubs and golf clubs known to be frequented by Smith. Moore must be well aware that his quarry is probably not on the premises, much less willing to be trapped by an irate movie-maker, but of course his evic-

tions by flustered club secretaries make for rousing stuff.

And there are the almost insane efforts made by the city of Flint to recapture its fading prosperity. They built a huge hotel, visited only by a few old ladies playing Scrabble; they invited Ronald Reagan and a television evangelist to cheer them up; they constructed an automobile theme park, but no one came to it. At the end, Moore blandly intercuts Mr Smith's Christmas message to his staff, very rosy and Dickensian, with shots of some of Flint's more feckless citizens facing Christmas Eve eviction. Altogether, a sly piece of journalism, with old-style liberal outrage dressed in trappings more sophisticated than they may appear.

Christian Blackwood's *Motel* stops off at three assorted motels and takes in others on the way, including one where the guests sleep in wigwams. One of the three, directly opposite a gaol, is mainly visited by the prisoners' relations. There's a sinister story, much repeated, about a young man who was let out during his mother's visit, chopped her into small pieces, and was caught when he tried to sell the bones to the guards as dog food. The third motel, in a ghost town, has been taken over by a former dancer because it has a theatre attached. In one wonderfully forlorn and comic sequence, she dances through her crumbling premises, which seem destined to remain so, pointing a disdainful foot at evidences of dereliction. Blackwood's film is generous, amusing and alert to oddity and the people he talks to are often not merely articulate but eloquent. All done, he insists, without retakes.

Both these films relish a cranky eccentricity. Emile de Antonio's *Mr Hoover and I* might also be thought by some a little cranky, since de Antonio remains convinced that all countries are largely run by their secret police forces. Having more to say about its creator than about the arch-villain Hoover, the film is an illuminating, entertaining, tendentious and crotchety ramble through de Antonio's life, a portrait of a good talker talking. There is slightly too much, perhaps, of de Antonio engaging in banter while his wife cuts his hair. Which simply means that I prefer to see the investigative journalist on duty rather than unbuttoned. In a film which seems to be addressed to his friends as much as to the outside world, anything, very properly, goes.

To my surprise, I catch de Antonio out in an error—a minor one, not relevant to any of his main themes. He gracefully acknowledges the mistake, then goes on to say, 'It's a ninety-minute film. We can't be expected to check every fact.' So there are still different standards for print and screen journalism.

Along with all the new features, Toronto mounted a Polish retrospective. Without exception, the Poles at the press conferences expressed only gloom at immediate prospects for their cinema, with every penny of cash needed for schools, hospitals and the like. Couldn't they attract foreign investment for 'international' subjects? Perhaps they could, but Agnieszka Holland was the firmest in pointing out that perhaps they shouldn't.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

GDANSK

Metaphors for Poland

The Gdansk Festival of Polish Films now takes place in Gdynia, some fifteen miles along the coast, where it was moved in 1986 because of industrial unrest (read *Solidarity*). Last autumn's festival—the fourteenth—was probably the most interesting, disturbing and politically acute event in its short history.

In the world outside the Theatre of Musicals, where the films were shown, Poland is going through momentous political change and struggling with its crumbling economy. Against this background, the films—loosely classified as Features, Information Section and the political *Solidarity* group ('films from the shelf') head the way in outspokenness. Every film seemed to make some reference to political events, bringing thunderous cheers, laughter and applause from the capacity audience.

In the *Solidarity* group, the most important is Ryszard Bugajski's *Interrogation*, made in 1981, completed just as martial law was proclaimed, banned and only now receiving its first 'legal' 35mm screening, though it has been circulating for some years as an underground video. It is not clear why the authorities have been so slow in lifting this particular ban, when new films have been allowed to say what they like; and Bugajski, who now lives in Canada, was not there to relish his triumph. A study of the complex relationship between captor and prisoner in a Polish gaol during the Stalinist period, *Interrogation* is extremely powerful. Krystyna Janda, who plays the tormented heroine, brought the audience to tears when she received the festival's only prolonged standing ovation.

Janusz Kijowski's *State of Terror* is another harrowing study, this time of the *Solidarity* martial law period, in which all efforts and friendships are eventually reduced to nothing because political events breed only treachery and mistrust. There is nowhere to turn to find truth, and anyone who believes otherwise is doomed to a tragic end.

Audiences also wept copiously at the close of Maciej Dejczer's popular *300 Miles to Heaven*, the true story of two young brothers who hid under the chassis of a lorry and escaped to Sweden in 1985. Their purpose was to help their hard-pressed parents leave Poland, but there was no happy ending. Neither is happiness to be found in Jacek Skalski's very assured first feature *I Feel Like Screaming*, in which a student

spends a passionate weekend with a lonely woman. The young man, fleeing conscription, is caught and beaten. The woman is alone again with her growing madness.

Less hermetic is Krzysztof Tchorzewski's *The Inner State*, in which Krystyna Janda plays a woman who sets a new round the world yachting record, but runs into trouble when after martial law she refuses to give the Polish government any recognition for her achievement. Again, there's a tragic ending for everyone concerned.

Among the non-Solidarity films, three by well-known directors received mixed reviews. Filip Bajon's *Ball at the Koluszek Junction*, promising much but delivering little, is one of those familiar stories in which a group of travellers is thrown together, stranded at a station on New Year's Eve. With a good deal of drinking, masks are dropped and true selves revealed—unlikeable and uninteresting. Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *The Hostage of Europe* details the rotten time Napoleon gave the British governor, Hudson Lowe, during his imprisonment on St Helena. Even the French were bored. But Krzysztof Zanussi's *Inventory*, though dismissed by most critics, is a strikingly filmed and acted tv piece, about a mother, her son, and the woman he falls in love with but eventually fails. It is spoilt only by some unhappy moments of what looks like improvisation.

Leszak Wosiewicz's *Kornblumenblau* caused a stir. It concerns a Polish prisoner in Auschwitz who learns that the only way to survive is by taking advantage of anything and everything that comes his way. If need be, other people must be abandoned; never betrayed, just ignored. The director describes this bleak film, a study of unprincipled survival in a sea of immorality, as a 'metaphor for Poland'. So are most of the Solidarity films. If we were to judge only by their films, the Poles would seem the most depressed people on earth.

Most of the misery comes, incidentally, with a heavy dose of nudity and sexual activity. One suggestion is that, as the party loses power, the church is waiting to move in and reassert its moral position: soon there will be no more sex scenes. It has already been made known that *The Last Temptation of Christ* will never be shown in cinemas in Poland or legally on video. The oddest film in the festival: the Polish-Czech production of Stevenson's *The Body Snatchers*, by Stanislaw Rozewicz. The only body seen is that of a lively, lovely nude actress.

GERALD PRATLEY



A City of Sadness.

VENICE

Standing on the Tower of Babel

There was plenty of evidence at the 46th Venice Film Festival that the cinema has a natural wanderlust. Pictures need no translation, and therefore are most qualified to cross borders, make the foreign familiar and foster international understanding. But on the best of the present evidence, one might almost say that the opposite is true, that films are most interesting about other times and places when they have the ability to make themselves strange, to 'go foreign', to reproduce what it feels like to be standing on the Tower of Babel rather than in some esperanto nirvana. The picture that is worth a thousand words might be less rewarding than the picture that is complicated by a thousand words.

The festival champion at this was Peter Brook's film of his stage production of *The Mahabharata*. This is an adaptation (by Jean-Claude Carrière) of a fourth-century Indian saga, a great boiling of gods and demigods who through many weird and wonderful begettings give rise to something like the human race, and a clash of heroes as exciting and terrible as the *Iliad*. In word count, apparently, this epic would bury the Bible many times over, and to put across its great feat of narrating Brook staged his original play on three evenings at the Avignon Festival in 1985. His filmed treatment comes in either a slim 171-minute cinema version or 321 minutes for tele-

vision; the latter is not just the truer version but probably the more compulsive viewing, since what this is about is the work involved in 'telling' the world into existence.

Alain Resnais often seems to have taken the attitude that his films are about something foreign to them, that they're documentaries 'about' their own screenplays. The documentarist of *Last Year at Marienbad*, though, will probably shock admirers with how foreign he has gone in *I Want to Go Home*, a farce about an American strip cartoonist (Adolph Green) unwillingly transported to Paris for a cartoon festival. His real motive for going is to find his daughter, who has spurned the provincialism of Cleveland Heights to pursue her passion for French literature with professor Gérard Depardieu. He of course turns out to have no interest in reading theses on Balzac or Proust, but is boyishly eager to demonstrate his encyclopaedic knowledge of her father's cartoons (he spends the last third of the film dressed as Popeye).

This is not quite the cartoon subject Resnais has always dreamed of making, though it has the disconcerting rhythms (it is mostly in English), the in-between oddity one often finds when animators turn to live-action films. And it has a moral: only those who have accepted home can leave it (Francophobe Green winds up with Depardieu's *maman*; his Francophile daughter must make a reverse pilgrimage back to Cleveland Heights), the true foreigners are those who are placeless.

Other visitors proved less able

to adapt themselves, or to assume anything other than the jaundiced or the rosy tourist's-eye view. Paul Cox's *Island*, for instance, about three displaced women—an Australian of Czechoslovakian origin (Eva Sitta), a Sri Lankan (Anoja Weerasinghe) and a Greek (Irene Papas)—who are brought together on an island in the Dodecanese for some mutual psychodrama, seems both dyspeptic and smug. Gabriel Axel's *Christian*, in which the delinquent young hero, fleeing across Europe guitar (when not in hock) in hand, finally finds true love in Morocco, is as exploratory of foreign parts and as useful a contribution to international understanding as the Eurovision Song Contest.

And then there is Henry Jaglom, from whom words are pouring forth from the opening moments of *New Year's Day* ('... time to move on'). In this he is called Drew, whose mid-life crisis has driven him from the West Coast back to New York on a snowy New Year's Eve, only to find the three (about to be displaced) women to whom he has sub-let his apartment still there due to a misunderstanding about the lease. What follows is funny-sad psychodrama in the Jaglom manner, as the three women (Gwen Welles, Maggie Jakobson, Melanie Winter) agonise about the consequences of moving on, Drew attempts to re-establish territory, and their number is swelled by friends and relatives (including Milos Forman) come to speed or retard the leave-taking. If the words, as always in Jaglom, are like a warm bath, drowning the images in cosy domesticity, they do in the end open up a foreign territory, some land of lost or unrealisable content, where feelings, ever-pursued, evanescent and ambiguous, are known, specifiable and forever.

In this context, it is both appropriate and well-deserved that Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* should have won the festival's Golden Lion. Set in Taiwan in 1945, Hou's film is about a family caught in the island's violent transition, after fifty-one years, from Japanese to Chinese rule. For a Western audience, this world is made harder to penetrate by the film's terseness in explaining the relationships of four brothers, their families, friends and associates. But *A City of Sadness* is about the unsettling of the Taiwanese themselves, about the babel of a culture that has known too many rulers and divisive languages.

In style, though, the film suggests not so much estrangement as a world in suspension, awaiting the outcome of this tussle

between cultures, between past and future, between its sequence of domestic scenes, perfectly composed frames and frames within frames, and the historical tumult of noises off. Sight and sound are delicately balanced here, an unsteady equilibrium that is suggested as well in the hero, the youngest brother and the family's frail hope for the future, who is a deaf-mute and runs a photo studio.

RICHARD COMBS

TOKYO

From the richest to the poorest...

Third time lucky for the Tokyo Film Festival. Having come to terms with the high ambitions of its first edition, which provided a \$1.5m prize for the most promising newcomer, and survived the confusion of its second, the festival has become the most important event of its kind in Asia. An instructive seminar on new technologies and well-regulated meetings with directors, including a marathon with Kurosawa, bore witness to the intention of making Tokyo a focal point for discussion and exchange.

It was a little odd perhaps to find no fully-fledged section on new Japanese cinema and that the market was left to take place informally among the many powerful guests from the United States. These, however, are issues which the new directorate is keen to resolve. It was odd, too, that the talk of the festival was not chiefly about the respectable list of films on display, but about the future; Sony's acquisition of Columbia and the misconstrued erection of 'Fortress Europe' were the key reference points, alongside national pride in the extraordinary technological achievements which baffled many visitors.

The most significant act of the jury, chaired by Sandy Lieberman and with \$150,000 at its disposal, was its award to Idrissa Ouedraogo's *Yaaba* from Burkina Faso. This, from the richest to the poorest nation of the world, was not a gift, but a proper recognition of a talent which needs no fancy gadgets to make its mark on cinema history. The cash prize will be invested in a new film, thus reinforcing Tokyo's image as a helping hand as well as a cultural event. Similarly, the official prize, to Rajko Grlic's *That Summer of White Roses* (Yugoslavia), was no political compromise but a justified reward for quality.

The prizewinners could not be more different. From the touching story of the friendship between an old woman, chased from her village for suspected

witchcraft, and a little boy, to the tough chronicle of survival in Yugoslavia during the Occupation, with fine performances from Tom Conti, Susan George and Rod Steiger, these films reveal universal concerns through the analysis of very culturally specific contexts.

Most significant for the 'distant observer', however, were the Japanese films which enterprising producers screened for guests outside the festival. Two were particularly striking: *Circus Boys* by Kaizo Hayashi (author of *To Sleep So As to Dream*, 1986) and the first feature, as yet without an English title, by Seijun Suzuki, an assistant to Sogo Ishii on *Crazy Family*.

The former is a stylish black and white odyssey (with echoes of both Terayama and Fellini) of an ex-circus artist who becomes embroiled in crime and dreams of returning to the happy family of his childhood; the latter an astute version of *Rocky*, in which boxing is equated with the westernisation of Japanese culture. Two innovative paths in new Japanese cinema are marked by these films: surreal naturalism and hard-hitting, issue-driven realism. Both are fearless in their appropriation of generic archetypes drawn from western film culture, yet both manage to create uniquely effective hybrids which mock and tease those same archetypes.

At the other end of the scale, the publishing company Kodansha gave guests a taste of their new epic, *Heaven and Hell*, a mega-yen historical extravaganza, full of empty, bewildering spectacle and a very pale shadow of Kurosawa. The film seemed

somewhat like a test for special effects and ear-piercing new sound techniques, making you feel the uncomfortable edge of the pursuit of technological supremacy. One came away from the festival, however, with a more vivid memory of the heart-felt applause that greeted Idrissa as he came on stage to receive his prize.

DON RANVAUD

A 'KINORA' DISCOVERY

Thirty seconds of Dan Leno on film

Joseph Grimaldi, Dan Leno and Charles Chaplin; the three names almost inevitably linked as the greatest comic geniuses to emerge from the British theatre. Chaplin's artistry is preserved for all to see, while Grimaldi died long before the advent of cinema. But until recently film of Leno—the most famous of all Victorian music hall and pantomime performers—has proved tantalisingly elusive.

Last year, however, a 'Kinora' reel made up of hundreds of small, but extremely clear paper prints was discovered in the relatively unlikely setting of the Fox Talbot Museum at Lacock, Wiltshire. The reel, which shows Leno and his wife involved in burlesque attempts to open a bottle of champagne (at one stage using a gigantic axe), was taken from a British Mutoscope and Biograph Company film and is one of many similar items featuring actualities, short comic scenes and 'animated portraits'

of stage and music hall celebrities manufactured for a domestic 'What-the-butler-saw' machine during the early years of the century. Although lasting only about thirty seconds, as a record of a legendary theatrical figure and major influence on subsequent comedians (Chaplin was once billed as 'the Dan Leno of the Cinema') this snippet is of immense interest.

Leno (1860-1904) was born into a struggling variety family and from his debut at the Cosmotheke Music Hall, Paddington, at the age of four he appeared in an endless succession of working men's clubs, pub 'free-and-easies' and, in his own words, 'dust-hole' theatres. By 1881 his talents were so widely recognised that a national theatrical newspaper referred to him as 'one of the best of Concert Hall artistes'. A triumphant London appearance in 1885 enabled him to break into the leading music hall circuits and led to an offer to star in the prestigious Drury Lane pantomimes.

From that time onward, he became the darling of middle-class audiences, who found pantomime an acceptable alternative to the more unruly world of the music hall, although, like Grimaldi, he remained painfully humble and did not adjust well to his public role as 'The Funniest Man on Earth'. The reasons for Leno's success were many—he was a brilliant patter comedian with a bizarre line in material which often mixed realism and absurdity; he was an unrivalled dancer; and, most important in a cinema context, he was the greatest pantomimist of his age.

Leno's career lasted just long enough for him to become one of the first 'star' names in early British films. His nationwide fame and his talent for impromptu clowning caused producers such as the Warwick Trading Agency, Birt Acres and the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company to seek him out. As demonstrated by the 'Kinora' reel, it is from the Biograph group of films that discoveries may yet be made.

It is almost certain that he was featured on other Mutoscope (the company's public viewing machine) and 'Kinora' reels, and films such as 'Dan Leno fooling in the Charity Cricket Match at Kennington Oval' (exhibited from October 1901) and 'Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell edit The Sun' (April 1902) may still exist in this form.

'Kinora' reels and their circular cardboard boxes are seldom labelled, and without specialist knowledge of the theatrical personalities of the period identification can be a major problem. Fortunately, frame illustrations

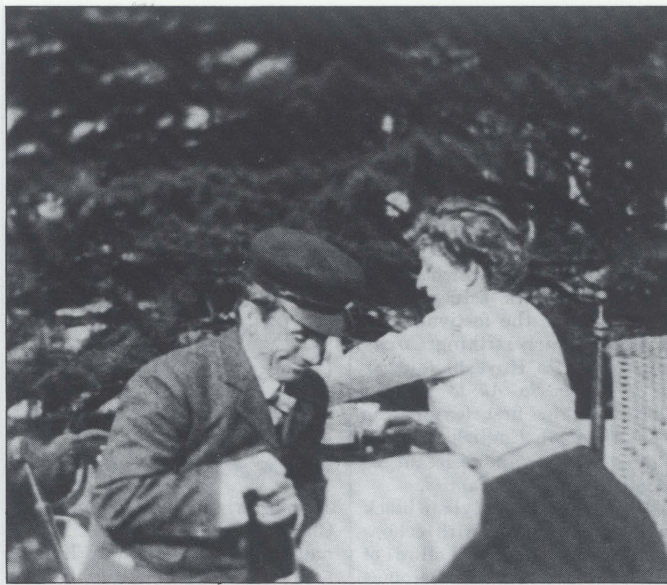
Circus Boys.



from several of Leno's Biograph films were published in books and magazines: an illustration in J. Hickory Wood's *Dan Leno* (1905) titled 'Birthday Rejoicings' is clearly a frame from another take of the 'Kinora' episode.

'Kinora' reels showing the magician David Devant ('The Incubated Head', 1903) and the Scottish comedian Harry Lauder have been located in the Barnes collection and the Mander and Mitchenson collection respectively, but other celebrities undoubtedly remain to be recognised. It must be hoped that the discovery of this reel will lead to the uncovering of further items so that they may be transferred on to film. Although only fleeting, they would provide a vivid glimpse into a golden age of entertainment.

BARRY ANTHONY



Dan Leno: a frame from the 'Kinora' reel.

CINEMAYA

Labour of love

One test of a new magazine is whether it tells you something you didn't know before. By that yardstick, *Cinemaya*—the brave new Asian film quarterly now preparing its fifth issue—must be considered a success. In each number to date, there have been articles one wouldn't readily forgo: Donald Richie's in-depth analysis of *Humanity and Paper Balloons*; an interview with Hou Hsiao-hsien on his new film *A City of Sadness*, and Houshang Golmakani's tantalising survey of the renaissance in Iranian cinema in the last years of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Cinemaya is a labour of love, published out of New Delhi as an independent venture. Aruna Vasudev, the editor, has a PhD from Paris and is a dedicated film buff; she has organised seminars on Asian film studies and has served on the jury of the Hawaii Film Festival.

Unlike many Indian journals, it looks professional. Funds for the first issue came from the National Film Development Corporation, after which costs had to be met by advertisements. The Ministry of Culture, however, has stumped up some money for the fourth issue since it focuses on censorship, something that comes under the Ministry's wing. The print run is 3,000, but most of these are still being sent out as promotion material. Distribution, unsurprisingly, remains a problem.

The magazine aims to be a forum for the airing of views and sharing of information about Asian cinema. A theme raised in the first editorial, but so far only desultorily addressed, is whether there is such a thing as speci-

fically Asian cinema. Is there not just cinema?

For a time, western critics certainly thought so, as Tony Rayns points out. After recovering from the initial culture shock, they found it comparatively easy to assimilate Japanese cinema. Old masters (Ozu and Mizoguchi), young Turks (Oshima and Terayama) and middle-of-the-road craftsmen (Ichikawa) appeared to correspond closely to a hierarchy with which they were familiar. Since then, however, Japanese cinema seems to have reverted to type and, in the 1980s, is perceived once again as remote and alien.

A useful article by Ken'ichi Okubo puts recent Japanese movies in perspective. The reason they seem unfamiliar, he suggests, is that the growth in video has altered the viewer's sense of time. Since one can now 'fast-forward' through the dull bits, traditional storytelling techniques have been undermined and films leap from one sensation to the next. Modern Japanese movies like Naoto Yamakawa's *So What* and Tosuke Sato's *Banana Shoot* are disorienting because they seem to dispense with cause and effect.

By far the best thing in *Cinemaya* to date has been the study of Sadao Yamanaka, only three of whose 23 films are extant but whose place in the vanguard of 1930s Japanese cinema is assured. Professor Shigehiko Hasumi of Tokyo University has contributed an informative account of the formation in Kyoto in 1934, under Yamanaka's leadership, of a band of eight young filmmakers who took the name Narutaki-gumi, after the neighbourhood in which they lived.

Their aim was to modernise historical films and to shake up the Japanese studio system.

They made their historical characters speak in modern Japanese, dispensing with the formalised dialogue of conventional historical films. Their movies, in fact, became known as 'contemporary dramas with a topknot'. Few, perhaps, will have realised that Yamanaka's innovations in *Humanity and Paper Balloons* formed part of a concerted effort to overthrow the entrenched formulae of the *jidai-geki*.

Future issues, one hopes, will be as helpful about the Chinese cinema. Ma Ning's assessment of the 'fifth-generation' filmmakers, which emphasises their stylistic departures while glossing over the true significance of the content, can only be regarded as an interim report.

ALAN STANBROOK

STICKS NIX B PIX

The market bottoms out...

When the trades reported the death of the Bs in Alphabet City, it was no obituary for Scott and Beth. The bibles of show business were mourning the demise of B pictures, those parcels of action and adventure, horror and sexploitation, whose lease on life seems to have expired on the circuit of international 'market events', all with acronyms, which traditionally kept Hollywood's 'B' hawkers out of hock.

No longer. At last autumn's Milan MIFED, the merchants of schlock discovered what horror really is as they helplessly watched the bottom fall out of the market for B pictures. Like any other business, the motion-picture trade is governed by supply and demand. As the video industry began to take off world-

wide a few years ago, there was a sudden demand for product to fill the software void: anything with a beginning, a muddle and an end would do, providing it was in colour and lasted at least 90 minutes.

In the meantime, however, the video market has become saturated with product. (A less cynical, but also less credible explanation is that home-video audiences in those countries have become more sophisticated.) And the Alexanders of B films have found no new territories to conquer. Their clients, those distributors who bought films by the yard during the boom, must now be choosier when they go shopping in Milan. Today, only 'quality' will do.

But what does 'B' mean anyway? For critics it refers to the Roger Corman tradition of low-budget genre film-making. But for the distributors who do the buying at MIFED, B might as well stand for almost anything that doesn't boast the stars and budget of *Batman*. And for salesmen at MIFED, the newly dilated parameters of 'B' now means that bargain-basement camp like *Laid in the USA* is being conflated with \$10m worth of Charles Bronson's smouldering charisma. In response, a more discriminating grading system has been developed: the industry gathered in Milan witnessed the birth of the 'A-' and the 'B+' film.

It was never a secret that many of the so-called 'A' titles on offer were A in name only, with the odd star in the cast and the eighth digit in the budget not quite adding up to 'quality'. But an A- film specifically boasts a budget greater than \$10m together with a name director and/or actor; more often than not, however, the names are John Frankenheimer or Michael Caine.

A B+ film must also cost \$10m, but it usually stars members of the Mitchum, Stallone or Sheen/Estevéz family whose names are not Robert, Sylvester or Charlie. (Any version of *The Phantom of the Opera*, of which four were making the rounds in Milan, also rates a B+.) 'B', then, refers to knockoffs starring actors and actresses named 'Bo' in which a deal involving South Africa was instrumental in assembling the budget.

Industry observers at MIFED witnessed some further hair-splitting over letters: one high-volume, low-quality huckster, for example, named his collection of sub-B video titles from the 1950s and 60s the 'Action Boutique' in an effort to cop a higher mark. By and large, however, the new grading system went uncontested.

WILLIAM FISHER

1989 OBITUARY

NOVEMBER 1988: Sidney Carroll, scriptwriter (*The Hustler*, *A Big Hand for the Little Lady*); Sheilah Graham, gossip columnist, F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'beloved infidel'; John Carradine.

DECEMBER 1988: Roberto Palaggi, producer of the Spencer and Hill comedies; Jerry Hopper, director of routine Universal programmers in the 1950s; Bob Steele, prewar cowboy star, later minor heavy killed at least twice by Bogart; Hal Ashby.

JANUARY: Errol Le Cain, director/ animator, often in collaboration with Richard Williams; John Loder, dauntless British he-man (*Sabotage*, the 1937 *King Solomon's Mines*); Beatrice Lillie; Leslie Halliwell, he of the Guide and the Companion; Arthur Lonergan, art director (*Forbidden Planet*, *MASH*); Morton Da Costa, director whose Broadway hits occasionally brought him to Hollywood (*Auntie Mame*, *The Music Man*); Eddie Le Veque, last of the Keystone Kops.

FEBRUARY: John Cassavetes; Lionel Newman, composer/conductor at Fox for 40 years; André Cayatte, cinematic scourge of the French legal system; Osamu Tezuka, director of crude but imaginative cartoon features (*Cleopatra Queen of Sex*, *Pictures at an Exhibition*); T. E. B. Clarke, writer, essential component of the Ealing comedy machine; George O'Hanlon, 'Joe McDoakes' of the comedy shorts, the man behind the 8-ball; Frank King, one of the three independent producer King Brothers; Richard Roud, writer, critic, friend of the cinema; Marguerite Roberts, scriptwriter (*Ziegfeld Girl*, *True Grit*); Alexander Medvedkin, i/c the Soviet 'film train'; Evald Schorm, leading director of the pre-1968 Czech 'New Wave'; Margo Lion, actress (*La Bandera*, Pirate Jennie in Pabst's French version of *Threepenny Opera*).

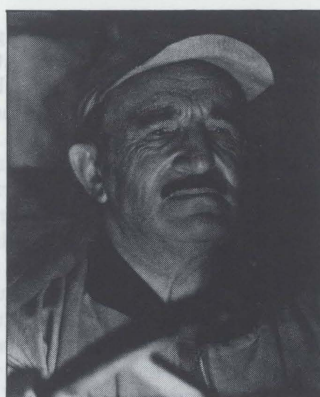
MARCH: Harry Andrews, lantern-jawed British character actor; Edward Dryhurst, producer (*So Well Remembered*, *Noose*); Maurice Evans, stage superstar who sometimes dropped in on the movies (the 1961 *Macbeth*, *Rosemary's Baby*); Captain J. B. L. Noel, explorer/cameraman whose *Epic of Everest* recorded the ill-fated Mallory-Irvine expedition of 1924; Richard E. Lyons, producer (*Ride the High Country*, *Coogan's Bluff*); Henry Cass, unassuming British director (*The Glass Mountain*, *Last Holiday*); Reginald LeBorg, churner-out of B-pictures featuring the Bowery Boys, Joe Palooka, etc; Jack Starrett, director of some interesting

thrillers in the mid-1970s (*The Gravy Train*, *Race With the Devil*); Bernard Blier, homely but chameleonic player equally at home as embittered killer or suave detective; Madeleine Ozeray, actress (*Dans les Rues*, Lang's *Liliom*).

APRIL: Karel Zeman, creator of trick-filled fantasies; Mario Chiari, art director (*Le Carrosse d'Or*, *Notti Bianche*); Joan Barry, in *Rich and Strange* an early prototype of the Hitchcock fire-and-ice blonde; Charles Vanel, stocky, unsentimental actor, a favourite of Clouzot; Daphne Du Maurier, oft-filmed novelist; James Kirkwood, supporting actor, writer, co-author of *A Chorus Line*; Marc Daniels, television director from sitcoms (*I Married Joan*) to prestige specials (the Olivier *Power and the Glory*); Clyde Geronimi, co-director on Disney features from *Victory through Air Power* to 101 *Dalmatians*; George Coulouris, purveyor of multi-national villainy (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *This Land Is Mine*); Lucille Ball, scatty comedienne on screen, shrewd president of her Desilu company off it; Christopher Brunel, like his father Adrian a cinematic odd-job man, also active within union ACTT; Ondine, who shone briefly in the Warhol *galère*; Jack Cummings, producer, notably of MGM musicals (*Kiss Me Kate*, *7 Brides*); Ian Dalrymple, writer, producer, occasional director, head of Wessex Films; Geza von Cziffra, director of musical extravaganzas in the 1930s and 40s; Sergio Leone.

MAY: Marion Mack, Sennett bathing beauty, Buster's beloved in *The General*; Guy Williams, mini-swashbuckler, TV's Zorro; James Crabe, cameraman (*Save the Tiger*, *Rocky*); Johnny Green, songwriter ('I Cover the Waterfront', 'Body and Soul'), music director at MGM in the 1950s; Anton Doffing, leading Nazi beast of 1950s British war films; Lyn Murray, composer (*Son of Paleface*, *To Catch a Thief*); Gilda Radner, rawboned comedienne, often teamed with husband Gene Wilder (*Hanky Panky*, *The Woman in Red*); Gerd Oswald, intermittently talented director of international odds and ends; Ralph Bond, documentary film-maker (*Glimpses of Modern Russia*, *Advance Democracy*) who helped to set up trade-union production company ACT Films; André Bac, cameraman (*Le Point du Jour*, *L'Auberge Rouge*); Ruggero Maccari, scriptwriter with columns of credits from Totò comedies to Scola's *Le Bal*.

JUNE: André Michel, journeyman director; Richard Quine; Ottomar Domnick, documentary



Top to bottom:
Lucille Ball, Charles Vanel,
Marion Mack, Sergio Leone.

and experimental film-maker (Jonas, Gino); Ray McAnally, imposing player who enjoyed a late-blooming film career (*No Surrender*, *The Mission*); Henri Sauguet, composer (*Farrebique*, *L'Epervier*); Michele Lupo, another journeyman director; Joris Ivens.

JULY: Jean Painlevé, scientist/film-maker, chronicler of obscure organisms darting about the bottom of ponds; Franklin J. Schaffner; Jim Backus, Dean's

Dad in *Rebel*, the voice of Mr Magoo; Jean Bouise, character actor, usually exuding a goofy amiability (*La Guerre est Finie*, *The Big Blue*); Roger Richebé, enterprising producer (*La Chienne*, *Fanny*), later a less interesting director; Tommy Trinder, Cockney comic co-opted into the Ealing war effort; Mel Blanc, from whose double-jointed larynx issued the sound of Bugs Bunny, Sylvester and Co; Laurence (Lord) Olivier; Maurice Seiderman, make-up artist, responsible for rendering Citizen Kane in his various manifestations; Donald Brittain, documentarist with the National Film Board of Canada; Warren Low, editor (*Now*, *Voyager*, *True Grit*).

AUGUST: Nat Levine, president of Mascot and Republic Pictures, 'the serial king'; Robert Stevens, director for small screen (*Alfred Hitchcock Presents*) and big (*I Thank a Fool*); Jean Zay, costume designer (*Ruy Blas*, *Lola Montez*); John Meillon, Australia's answer to Elisha Cook; Hugo Del Carril, Argentinian director of the 1940s and 50s; Chrissie White, silent star, protégée of Cecil Hepworth; Joseph La Shelle, cameraman (*Laura*, *7 Women*).

SEPTEMBER: Georges Simenon, originator of much cinematic source material; Gina Manès, Gance's Josephine, Feyder's *Thérèse Raquin*; Harry Tugend, adept at scripting musical comedy (*A Song Is Born*, *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*); John Bright, writer, blacklist victim (*The Public Enemy*, *The Brave Bulls*); Michael Klinger, independent British producer (*Repulsion*, *Get Carter*); Jack Smith, director of the, in its time, notorious *Flaming Creatures*; Irving Berlin, at the age of 101; Virgil Thomson, who scored *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, *Louisiana Story*.

OCTOBER: Vittorio Caprioli, high-pressure actor (*Zazie dans le Métro*, *Adieu Philippine*), occasional director; Graham Chapman, a Python; Jacques Doniol-Valcroze; Noël-Noël, the put-upon Papa of many a cinematic household; Bette Davis; Jay Ward, producer for tv (cartoon series *Rocky and Bullwinkle*) and theatres (*Crazy World of Laurel and Hardy*); Bill Pallanca, who ran Connoisseur Films; Cornel Wilde, prosaic lead turned distinctly oddball director; Cesare Zavattini; James Lee Barrett, scriptwriter, who followed *The Greatest Story Ever Told* with *The Green Berets*; Anthony Quayle.

NOVEMBER: Brunello Rondi, scriptwriter (notably for Fellini), director (*Il Demonio*).

Compiled by BOB BAKER

FILM CITIES

JULIAN PETLEY REPORTS ON BIRMINGHAM'S 'CITIES AND MEDIA' FORUM AND
TYNESIDE'S FILM-MAKERS; AND JOHN PYM ON TWO MERSEYSIDE PRODUCTIONS

NORTH BY NORTHEAST

According to the London Research Centre, the number of people leaving the capital has risen sharply in the last three years: 33,000 in 1986/7, 65,000 in 1987/8, and the predicted figure for 1988/9 is 70,000. Firms are leaving at the rate of 100 a week. Property prices, spiralling rents and a deteriorating environment have clearly all contributed to the exodus. Film and television companies have been doubly hit: first, they tend to congregate in Soho, one of the most packed and pricey parts of the West End; and secondly, the level of general congestion makes any location work increasingly difficult.

'London is now a nightmare from the production point of view,' Myles Lang, a senior designer at the BBC, told the Cities and Media Forum at the Birmingham Film and Television Festival in September. Now in its fifth year, the festival is one of the most innovative in Britain, and this was the third forum held under its aegis. The two-day event addressed every aspect of the location business: the practical, financial and creative factors which come into play when a production company looks for a city location; the complex relationships between outside investment, local industry and municipal image; and the business collaboration between the public and private sector.

By the end, it was clear that while the problems of making film and television programmes in London are multiplying, other British cities are coming to identify themselves as 'media cities'. They are no longer content simply to sell themselves as production locations, but are encouraging local authorities to become involved financially in specific projects and hoping to boost employment by the establishment of permanent production bases in the area. In other words, a revival of the Greater London Council's 'cultural industries' argument on a national scale.

It will, however, be a long time, if ever, before any UK city develops the sophisticated municipal machinery for dealing with film and television production commonplace in North America. The forum listened somewhat enviously

to Wendy MacKeigan, executive coordinator of the Ontario Film Development Corporation, but at the same time kept the problems of a media city clearly in its sights.

The pros and cons were summarised by Paul Marris, formerly of the GLC and now with the North East Media Development Trust based in Newcastle. Media industries stimulate the local economy and its cultural identity, and even visiting productions can increase tourism—the 'Herriot' syndrome—and provide occasional work for local actors and technical staff. On the other hand, expenditure is finite and temporary and does little to establish permanent industries which can flourish in their own right. Furthermore, the pursuit of 'local colour', either light or dark, rarely contributes to a city's sense of its own identity and often ends as an exercise in cultural colonialism. As Sylvia Harvey of Sheffield Polytechnic pointed out, the fact that a film is shot in Sheffield does

not mean that it is *about* Sheffield.

Representatives from both Birmingham and Liverpool councils emphasised that local authorities become involved in television and film production as entrepreneurs not charity workers and look for a decent return on their investment. They want to know in particular what long-term contribution the media industries they attract are going to make to their cities.

As Albert Bore, chair of Birmingham's Economic Development Committee, put it at the launch of the city's Venture Capital Fund: 'The media industries can make a significant contribution towards changing perspectives of Birmingham, creating new jobs and diversifying the city's economic base.' Another Birmingham councillor, Rene Spector, said that a recent study of Liverpool, Glasgow and Ipswich showed that the return on every £1 invested in local arts activity was £2.60.

Although the forum took place

In Fading Light.



squarely in the Midlands, considerable time was devoted to the unfavourable Southern image of 'the North'—although, as Rene Spector noted, many Southerners consider Birmingham to be in the North. According to David Williams, marketing director of the Northern Development Company, the South regards the North as 'a cold and distant place, difficult to get to and still living in the shadow of the Depression,' an image sustained by the media and 'whistle-stop journalism'.

Due to the South's ever-growing problems, however, there was, he maintained, no better time for the North to capitalise on its advantages, the quality of its environment and its pool of labour and skills. There was no reason why the media industries in the North should not be as cosmopolitan and diverse as those in London, and certainly they need not be tied to geographical areas, subject matter or numerical quotas. The notion that 'Merseyside has had its share because of Mersey TV,' Jane Leighton of that company said, would provoke outrage if applied to London.

Birmingham was still smarting at the time of the forum from remarks by the Prince of Wales about one of its new buildings, and this may partly have accounted for the somewhat defensive tone of the informative session on city images, and that of Birmingham in particular.

Dorothy Hobson discussed Birmingham's image in television programmes such as *Gangsters*, *Empire Road*, *Crossroads* (set outside Birmingham in an imaginary motel), *A Very Peculiar Practice* and *Nice Work*. Handsworth, she said, had only attracted television coverage because of the disturbances, and this had heavily coloured the whole

area's image. Birmingham's bid for the Olympics had contributed to an improved self-image, but, she felt, this had been viewed by the rest of the country as a Birmingham rather than a British bid. David Rowlands complained of the dog-eat-dog attitude of British cities, London being the worst offender.

But the coming of 1992, Rene Spector said, may well push aside this squabbling, for while Birmingham and other cities outside London may suffer from Britain's anti-regional bias, European companies are unlikely to consider this relevant when looking for locations and production bases. Although the session sparked a small row (about the qualities or even the existence of the Birmingham accent), there was general agreement that there was an acute need for accurate images of all Britain's cities and all their citizenry.

With the Cities and Media Forum still fresh in my mind, I recently revisited the North East, where I used to live and work. For many Southerners, this is a region with a fixed image—at best slag heaps and Andy Capp, awash with whippets and Newcastle Brown, at worst well into dog-sleigh and reindeer territory. The truth, of course, is different. My purpose was to watch the shooting of *Women in Tropical Places* (Channel 4/Tyne-Tees/BFI), attend the screening of work from the North East Media Training Centre's full-time two-year course in film and video production, and see Amber's feature *In Fading Light* at its first showing before an audience from North Shields, where it was filmed.

Tyneside, the home of Tyne-Tees Television and BBC North East, owes its television image chiefly to *The Likely*

Lads, *When the Boat Comes In* and *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*. This, too, is 'Catherine Cookson country' and Tyne-Tees and World Wide International have cashed in with a version of the author's *Fifteen Streets*. One should also mention the Tyne-Tees/Carlton Productions adaptation of C. P. Taylor's play *And a Nightingale Sang*. Films with a Tyne-side setting include the little-known but excellent *Payroll*, directed by Sidney Hayers, with its fascinating glimpse of 'old' Newcastle, *Get Carter* and more recently *Stormy Monday* and *Ladder of Swords*.

In 1989, Newcastle hosted the Great North Media Show, organised by the Northern Development Company, which investigated many of the issues raised by the Cities and Media Forum. In the North East, these issues have been addressed most forcefully by the independent sector, acting closely with the local authorities. A key organisation has been the North East Media Development Trust (NEMDT), formed in 1984 by Amber Films, Trade Films, Swingbridge Video and A19 Film, four of the eight film and video workshops active in the area.

Working with media educationalists, sympathetic local councillors, a representative from the ACTT, and with support from Northern Arts, NEMDT set itself the goal of furthering the development of a regional, mixed-economy film and television industry. Originally, the trust (or council, as it then was) worked with the Economic Development Committee of Tyne and Wear County Council, which was keen that its first task be the training of technicians and programme-makers. Thus, in tandem with other initiatives, the North East Media Training Centre was established

Women in Tropical Places: Huffty Reah (Charmaine), Alison Doody (Celia). Photograph: Sarah Ainslie.



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in purpose-built studios in Pelaw, Gateshead.

With the abolition of Tyne and Wear, the five local authorities in the former metropolitan council's area took over its portion of the funding, a matching sum coming from the European Social Fund. Trainees are recruited on the basis of a vigorous equal-opportunities policy and standard academic qualifications are not necessarily taken into account. The courses combine industrial training and educational values, though media history and aesthetics are not subordinated to learning the technical know-how. The centre's work was impressive: varied, informed, often witty, and well up to film-school standards.

In a drive to develop an infrastructure which would encourage the growth of a media industry, NEMDT has addressed several of the issues raised by the White Paper on Broadcasting in order to lobby for the North in the coming shake-up. The trust wishes to see a retention of a Channel 3 (ITV) franchise for the North East, as opposed to its incorporation into a mega-region, measures to offset any trends towards cartelisation in the field of programme supply and quotas for regionally produced programming.

In addition, it is argued that Channel 5 should be located in the Northern region because, even if no programmes are actually produced in-house, the channel would employ a number of administrative staff (as Channel 4 does in London). However, it is unlikely that no programmes would be made, and any production would stimulate the local industry. Finally, the channel would significantly benefit any local economy in which it was based, raising an area's profile and encouraging inward investment, tourism and overall modernisation.

The trust also argues for the development of a Northern Regional Film Commission to help programme-making and the development of media industries. As examples, it points to North American models and to Liverpool, which recently established its own Film Liaison Office. The intention would be to offer location-finding and other back-up services and so encourage companies to film in the area. The commission might also establish a script-development fund and invest in local production, along the lines of the Scottish Film Production Fund, Film Cymru or the film commissions of Hamburg and Berlin.

In the meantime, NEMDT has been invited to join a regional film, video and television working party set up by the Northern Development Company. Other participants include Tyne-Tees, the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation, the Teesside Development Corporation and Zenith North.

Moving from infrastructure to image, it would be hard to deny that the workshops have provided a more accurate and illuminating picture of the North East in general and Tyneside in particular than either Tyne-Tees Television

or BBC North East. Key members of the workshop movement are Amber and Trade.

In 1989, Amber celebrated its twentieth anniversary by winning the BFI Independent Achievement Award. With its long-term objective the documentation of working-class life in the North East, Amber worked for many years with the people of Byker, a community now transformed by redevelopment, as well as concentrating on the region's traditional industries of shipping and coal. The award-winning *Seacoal* centred on an anarchic group of workers who make their living collecting coal from the beaches; and ended by painting a considerably less bleak portrait of these men and women than that found in Chris Killip's remarkable collection of photographs, *In Flagrante*. In another mode, *T. Dan Smith* examined the ramifications of the Poulson affair in a semi-fictional contemporary context.

Amber are now focusing on North Shields, a short distance down the Tyne from Newcastle, and have developed links with several organisations in the area—the unemployed group, a neighbourhood centre, the credit union, a residents' association, as well as various trade unions and employers. They have bought a pub in the shipyard area, which has helped them forge links with the community, and, more recently, purchased the old Town Mission overlooking the port, which has been converted to a studio/screening-room. Out of this has come *Shields Stories*, a series of brief soap-operas, and *In Fading Light*, their most ambitious project.

Written by Tom Hadaway, who was also responsible for *Seacoal*, and featuring music by The Waterboys, *In Fading Light* is an epic tale of hardship and survival set against the decline of the fishing industry. In the cause of authenticity, Amber purchased the trawler used in the film, and the actors were trained by Shields fishermen. Not since Mike Grigsby's *A Life Apart* and *Deckie Learner* have the rigours of life on a trawler been so vividly captured, and the audience of fishermen and their families in the Town Mission left one in no doubt of their approval.

If *In Fading Light* is to some extent about the experience of living and working in old Tyneside, *Women in Tropical Places* concentrates on the clash of old and new. It is the story of Celia (Alison Doody of *Indiana Jones* fame), the daughter of expatriates living in Argentina, who comes to Newcastle to marry George Pattison, whom she met in Cuba and who, she believes, is something of a local leftist hero. George, however, fails to appear, and she gradually realises that his activities could hardly be described as left-wing... in fact he's a property man, masterminding the redevelopment of the city.

This provides the film with one of its old/new oppositions and also, coincidentally, echoes *Stormy Monday*, in which a shady American businessman is buying up waterfront property in order to launder money. (In fact, the New-

castle side of the Tyne is being massively redeveloped by the Tyne and Wear Urban Development Corporation...) But the opposition is also exemplified by two other characters, Scarlet O'Hara, a veteran comedienne on the North East club circuit, and her daughter Charmaine, a 19-year-old skinhead who is trying her hand on the 'alternative' circuit.

Mix in an elliptical sub-plot about dirty dealings around the closure of North East Shipbuilders in Sunderland, and one ends with a bizarre, occasionally surreal, very good-looking picture of Newcastle. It is a long way from Amber's brand of naturalism, but contains sharp observations of life in a changing city for those attuned to its nuances.

The old/new dichotomy also reaches into the production team of *Women in Tropical Places*, which includes workers from the independent sector and from a conventional ITV company, Tyne-Tees. The film is produced by Fizzy Oppé, formerly of the North East Media Training Centre. The director and co-writer is Penny Woolcock who, when she worked at Trade Films in Gateshead, contributed to the innovative *Northern Newsreel*, a regular video bulletin much used by the local Labour movement. She also directed Trade Films' *When the Dog Bites*, an offbeat look at the former steel town of Consett, which did not please everyone in the local authority, but was shortlisted for the BFI's 1989 Independent Achievement Award.

The collaboration is judged a success. The independents have been able to work with a larger budget than usual (though, of course, it is never enough), while Tyne-Tees has been able to reap the benefits—even if not always wholly appreciated—of a mode of production that owes a good deal to the workshop sector.

All in all, the visit to Newcastle neatly illustrated many of the more abstract points made at the Birmingham forum. In particular, the NEMTC screenings showed the importance of training in the burgeoning cultural industries and the importance of local-authority support. This support, with other sources of funding, is vital in maintaining the workshop sector, without which the city would be bereft of those who have played the major role in recording its image and the lives of its citizens. The sector has also provided work for many who might otherwise never have found their way into 'the media'.

One might end by asking which is the more truthful, the elaborate, heritage-style representations of *And a Nightingale Sang* and *Fifteen Streets*, partly funded by outside sources, or the epic images of *Seacoal* and *In Fading Light*, made for dramatically less money? And which involved local people the more, not simply in the sense of providing them with work, but in presenting them with an image of their city to which they can actually relate? □

LIVERPOOL & FORMOST

As *No Surrender* and *Letter to Brezhnev* proved, Liverpool is best at being Liverpool. The city and its environs, though, are unfazed by visiting film and video crews: *The Mountains of the Moon*, *Red October*, the tv three-part *A Wanted Man*, the BBC's high-definition prototype *The Ginger Tree* and a French tv fantasy-fiction series in which, among other matters, oil-paintings come to life, have all recently been made (or partially made) on Merseyside. It was, however, an American director, Michael Cimino, intent on shooting an Irish story, a life of the patriot Michael Collins, on location in Liverpool, who nudged the city council into making a modest investment (£200,000 a year for two years) in municipal film finance.

'Cimino wanted to close off a street for a month and offered to pay handsomely,' said Paul Mingard, Liverpool's film liaison officer. 'The movie never materialised, but the offer alerted the council to the fact—recognised by such cities as New York, Hamburg and Berlin—that film companies can significantly boost the local economy.' Co-ordinated by Mingard, whose post is financed by Liverpool City Council and Mersey Television, the pilot investment scheme was launched last year with the council underwriting *The Man from the Pru*, an independently produced BBC film about a famous 1931 murder, to the tune of £120,000.

The Man from the Pru, scripted by Robert Smith, is a first feature by Rob Rohrer, a freelance documentary-maker and former Northern editor of the *New Statesman*, who grew up in Anfield, not far from Wolverton Street where Mrs Julia Wallace was killed. Like Rohrer, whose company Liverpool Films has an office in the refurbished Albert Dock, the story is Liverpool through and through. 'I wanted very much to recreate the feeling of the tight little rooms and cobbled jiggers I remember vividly from my childhood. I am pleased with the particular atmosphere we caught in St George's Hall; we shot in the court where the trial occurred and placed our Wallace on the exact spot that the real Wallace stood.'

The film, which will be transmitted in January in the Screen Two slot, was made as a television feature. Jonathan Pryce is Mr Wallace, the stoical insurance collector, by evening a science lecturer, whose wife (Anna Massey) enjoys the attentions of a womanising younger salesman. When she is killed and he is charged, William Wallace, who in the film at least has more than a touch of heroic dignity, declines to defend himself or to account for the fool's errand which took him out of the house at the crucial hour. Raymond Chandler described the case as 'the non-pareil of all murder mysteries'.

Melancholy, elliptical, full of unspoken disappointments, the story glancing back and forth in time and punctuated by a recurring newsreel nightmare of

an Eastern execution and blood spattering the swordsman's smiling face, *The Man from the Pru* is an accomplished period piece—penitential clothes, deeply inhaled cigarettes, the gathering clouds of the 30s—and amply fulfils its maker's ambition of summoning up Anfield's claustrophobic jiggers. Character roles often make such television films; and here Richard Pasco, as the prosecutor, and Philip Latham, the defence barrister, give chilling displays of the loftiness of the legal profession. The loftiness is matched by Wallace's coolness in the dock, a coolness which nearly sent him to the gallows.

Rohrer had been planning the film with his partner Marian Nelson since 1985, his interest in the case having been roused when, on its fiftieth anniversary, new testimony came to light apparently proving Wallace's innocence. By 1988, the BBC had been persuaded to commit, provided a co-producer could be found. 'A few months later,' Rohrer said, 'and this might have been a BBC-British Screen theatrical co-production. As it turned out, we just got in before things changed. This is a television film, shot on 16mm with close television framing. A theatrical release would be a bonus, but I'm not counting on it. The city council acted with characteristic

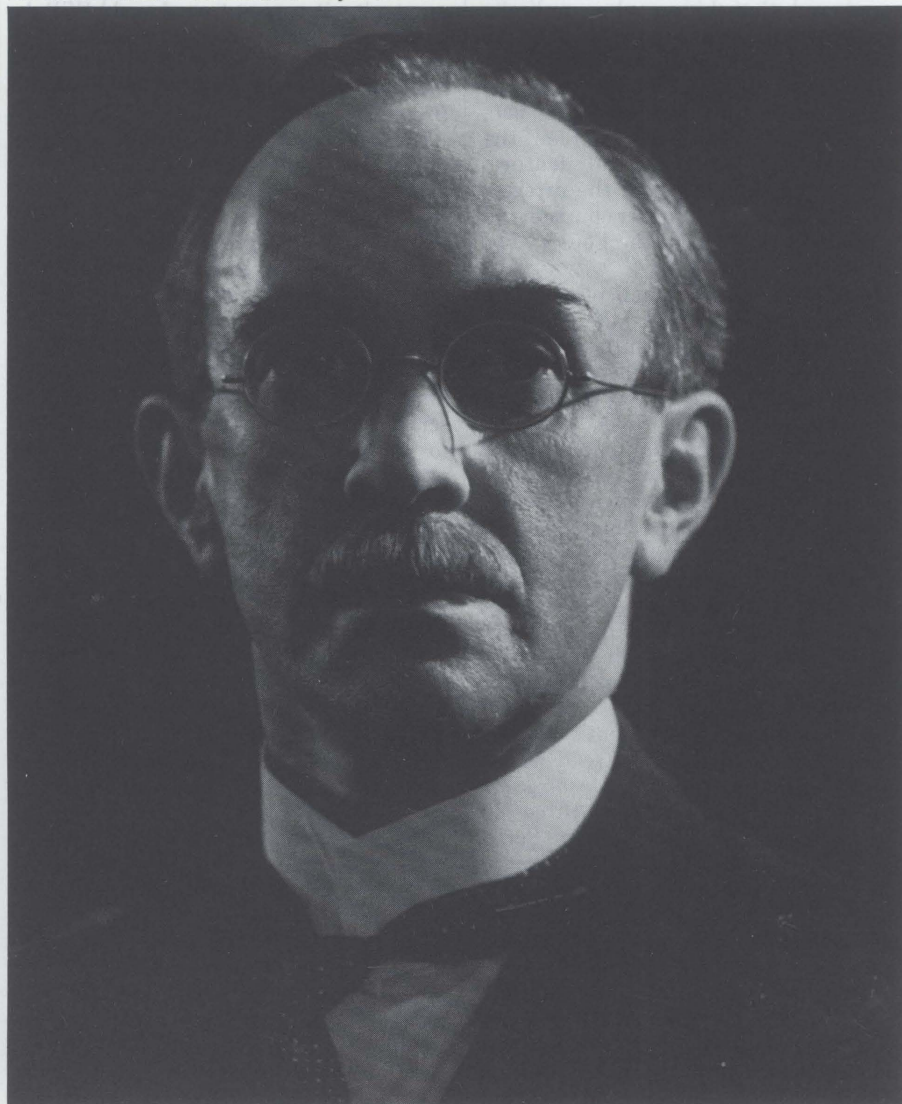
speed when we put the proposal to them. The timing from their point of view couldn't have been better. We were ready to go and here was a chance for them to test the water without undue risk.'

The council is pleased with the experiment. 'Out of an £800,000 budget, it was estimated that £100,000 would be spent in the city,' Mingard said. 'It turned out to be between £200,000 and £250,000.' Another part of Mingard's brief, as yet unrealised, is to help the council boost low-budget film-making, though this is unlikely to yield the immediate returns of a *Man from the Pru*, and in particular to back script development. At the time of writing, however, Liverpool City Council holds a nominal £80,000 of unspent production money...

Dancin' Thru the Dark began life as a play, *Stags and Hens*, written by Willy Russell when he was Fellow in Creative Writing at Manchester Polytechnic in the late 1970s. There were two sets, a gents and a ladies lavatory, and, when characters emerged into the space between them, the ballroom above was indicated by snatches of music.

Russell's student exercise was later opened out into a play proper: on the

The Man from the Pru: Jonathan Pryce (William Wallace).



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Dancin' Thru the Dark: Claire Hackett, Julia Deakin, Louise Duprey, Sandy Hendrickse.

night before her marriage, with the action alternating between stag and hen parties, young Linda realises almost too late that she is about to be snared and that Liverpool is a limbo from which she may never escape. The play in turn became a film which last summer went into production in Liverpool: a co-venture between the BBC, Palace Pictures and British Screen, the Corporation's first 'theatrical' feature. As Jack Gold remarked to the director Mike Ockrent, his former partner in Quintet Films (Film on Four's *The Chain*): 'Don't blow it!'

If Liverpool City Council played safe with *Man from the Pru*, the BBC has chosen cannily for its entry into the features market. Willy Russell, an extremely high-profile playwright, has successful revivals of *Blood Brothers* and *Shirley Valentine* running in the West End of London. Meanwhile, Pauline Collins, well-known on television, is being hailed a bona fide star for her performance in the film version of *Shirley Valentine*; and Con O'Neill, the young award-winning actor from *Blood Brothers*, has a leading crossover role, as Peter McGeegan, the flash rock singer who jolts Linda to her senses, in *Dancin' Thru the Dark*.

Add to this Mike Ockrent's copper-bottomed record as a theatre director: notably with the musical *Me and My Girl* (six years in London, three on Broadway) and with Stephen Sondheim's *Follies*, the unworkable reputation of which he deftly disproved. He began his professional career as a BBC trainee director with an untransmitted documentary on Jeffrey Archer.

A long-time friend of Willy Russell, Ockrent directed the pre-West End try-out of Russell's *One for the Road* (1979) and the original stage production of *Educating Rita*. Russell and Ockrent

(plus their families) were once despatched to Jamaica by Paul McCartney to write a film script, *Band on the Run*, about the formation of Wings—'It was a great pity it was not produced,' Willy's wife Annie said. 'It had a wonderful part for Linda and would have been much better than *Give My Regards to Broad Street*.'

The threads that bind the production are closely intertwined. The BBC co-producer Andrée Molyneux has known the Russells since producing Willy's 1974 schools TV programme *Break-ins* ('too encouraging to be repeated'). The film's originator, however, is Annie Russell: *Stags and Hens* was the one Willy Russell play she wanted to see done as a film. She created a company, Formost Films, and commissioned a script from her husband (he was also set to compose the music); her previous production experience having been as a sometime adviser on *Letter to Brezhnev*, the exuberant fantasy about two high-heeling Liverpool girls and their night on the town with the Russian navy.

Palace Pictures, the distributors of *Letter to Brezhnev*, took on *Dancin' Thru the Dark*, executive producer Chris Brown said, partly because it fitted the company's policy of backing first-time directors—this is Ockrent's first feature film. And, he added, because of the particular soundness of the package. 'With the BBC now becoming involved in theatrical production, we in the film industry—though one hesitates to call it that—can start making low-budget movies again.'

'Palace and British Screen are covering the costs below the line, the BBC above. I started in the movies and then did eight years in television before returning to films. The distinction between films and television does not exist for me.' *Dancin' Thru the Dark* will

receive a theatrical release sometime this year, and then enjoy a 'video life' before its television transmission in September 1991.

All film locations are essentially the same, only the places are different. *Dancin' Thru the Dark*, on the day of SIGHT AND SOUND's visit, was filming inside the now defunct Locarno ballroom on the vacant West Derby Road. The building had been a circus, and the set for the gents lavatory was next to the rank dungeon in which the elephant had been kept. 'The BBC made us star out some of the graffiti,' Annie Russell said. 'They couldn't accept some of those Anglo-Saxon words. What bothers me though are the racist slogans.'

'The Americans were interested in the play,' Willy Russell said. 'It was optioned, but I withdrew when there was talk of the "Brat Pack" and changing the location to America. The Locarno was where Annie and I danced as teenagers, though not together. The music wasn't always live, but the hall was packed six days a week. This was the place I wrote about in *Stags and Hens*. Lewis Gilbert directed the films of *Shirley Valentine* and *Educating Rita*, but I didn't show him this script. It wouldn't, I think, have been his scene.'

Mike Ockrent, a practised soother of senior actresses (Eartha Kitt was one of the stars of *Follies*), was briskly getting through a shot in the gents lavatory with a group of fast-talking Liverpool youths. His cameraman was Philip Bonham-Carter, fresh from the Venice prizewinner *She's Been Away*. 'I did a great deal of preparation,' Ockrent said. 'We storyboarded everything. Now it's chiefly a question of doing it. We are shooting on 35mm. It's amazing, did you know that until Dennis Potter's *Black-eyes*, the BBC didn't have a 35mm viewing-room...'

Henry V

by William Shakespeare



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present

Kenneth Branagh in Henry V ^{PG} by William Shakespeare

with

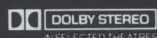
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Richard Briers
Robbie Coltrane
Judi Dench
Ian Holm
Derek Jacobi
Geraldine McEwan
Michael Maloney
Paul Scofield
John Sessions
Robert Stephens
Emma Thompson
Michael Williams


Music by

Patrick Doyle
Performed by
City of Birmingham
Symphony Orchestra
Conducted by
Simon Rattle
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David Parfitt
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Rupert Townsend: the film director killed in the name of economy.

'It's true that through self-exploitation, sacrifice, self-financing, etc, you can, with enormous difficulty, put something together. If you do that wholly independently, the chances of getting the film screened commercially, in any sense, or put up for sale or going on network television are minimal. That's a fact.' — ROY LOCKETT, ACTT

'The invigorating tale of the making of their feature, *Rules of Comedy*, is bizarre beyond the limits of dramatic convention ...'

— *The Independent*

For film production in Britain, it is increasingly the mainstream that decides what is 'right'. Increasingly, because oppositional cinema has all but ceased to exist here. The workshop sector is under threat, and the grant-aided sector seems determined to be but a shallow version of the mainstream. So, if you don't do what is right by the mainstream, in terms of practice, form and content, forget it. Forget funding, forget film-making on a scale beyond home movies and forget any hope of a significant audience for your work. An exaggeration? Perhaps, but to a good many film-makers that is the way things seem now.

This article takes a look at Build Hollywood, a London-based film production group. The above 'pop' at British film culture is born out by their experience of making a short feature film. Now, after nearly three years, the film, *Rules of Comedy*, is complete. Roy Lockett describes the fate of those who do the 'wrong' thing. Build Hollywood's write-up in the *Independent* suggests that, from a mainstream point of view,

they didn't appear to acknowledge that there was a 'right' way and a 'wrong' way of making films.

What follows is an outline comparison between a 'standard mode' of production and the way Build Hollywood made *Rules of Comedy*. The aim is to offer points of information and to open up (rightly or wrongly) the diverse ways and means by which films are made today in Britain.

Ideas and Development

Build Hollywood was founded in October 1986 as a theatre and film project. It ran according to an educational theory which believed that learning should be enjoyable, imaginative and exciting as well as demanding. The project was open to anyone. It seemed important that work-in-progress and the finished film should reach the public and not remain locked in the rarefied realm of education. Throughout the project, it was accepted that everyone would take responsibility for supplying ideas and effort, both as individuals and as a group working collectively.

From day one, up to thirty people, almost all without previous experience of film-making, began devising themes, characters, plots, scenes and sets; taking steps to acquire the skills needed for turning an idea into a film. At the beginning no one had a clue how much it would cost. Other than being positive that the finished film should be seen on the big screen and not a monitor (least of all a shelf), no thought was given to distribution. All Build Hollywood was concerned to do at this stage was set problems in terms of performance, content and film form. From then on, people made a full-time commitment to solving those problems in an entertaining and inventive way. In October 1986, the group expected this to take a year.

In a standard mode of production it is usually a producer who decides whether an idea or a script becomes a film. The producer might get an idea from an original story, play or novel. A director might come along with an idea; a writer with a script. Either way, producers will have preferred subjects, will know their markets and are unlikely to touch projects which fall outside them. The producer is also unlikely to accept material from someone with no track record. If he/she is working for a production company, it will have readers to vet unsolicited scripts. In the mainstream there are numerous procedures, conventions and people whose sole purpose is to stop ideas actually becoming films.

When a producer does take up an

ADRIAN BURNHAM

WRONG THING

idea, the first job is to raise development money. This finances script development, preliminary budgets and covers the cost of finding people to join a project. There are bodies such as the National Film Development Fund and the National Youth Film Foundation which loan money to projects until the first day of filming.

To raise the actual cost of production, a producer will have to pre-sell the film to one or a number of distributors. They won't hand over any money until the film is delivered, which means that the hard cash to pay for production has to be sought from banks and/or private investors. For their part, these financial backers won't go near a project unless it has a completion guarantee, a form of insurance which protects the investor should a film not get finished. Securing finance costs money. With a bank or private investor, the producer might get away with a few per cent over base rate. The completion guarantee will cost a percentage of the total film budget and this is calculated after a ten per cent contingency margin has been added. Until all this is taken care of, starting pre-production for a mainstream film is unthinkable.

For Build Hollywood, development money of sorts could be said to have

come from the Inner London Education Authority. The Authority originally housed the project and paid some part-time teaching hours to it. This money was used as follows:

1. Hiring, studying, re-creating and shooting scenes from films, including *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *Night of the Hunter*, *The General*, *Modern Times*, and *One From the Heart*.
2. Researching the life and work of Mack Sennett, Mabel Normand, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman and the social history of America early in this century. Anarchism, labour history, the rise of consumerism, the transition from silent to sound films: these are some of the themes running through *Rules of Comedy*.
3. Constructing innovative sets: perspectival corridors and rooms with windows that doubled as cinema screens, for example. This was a set in which the first performance of work-in-progress took place. The second show was staged in several sets and used video with simultaneous broadcast from one set 'cut' with live performance in another. These were practical steps towards designing and structuring the film itself.

Build Hollywood developed the basis of a screenplay by working towards

these live performances. The music of the 1920s and 30s was studied and original material written and performed. All this took considerable time, effort and finance, but the actual pre-production was yet to come.

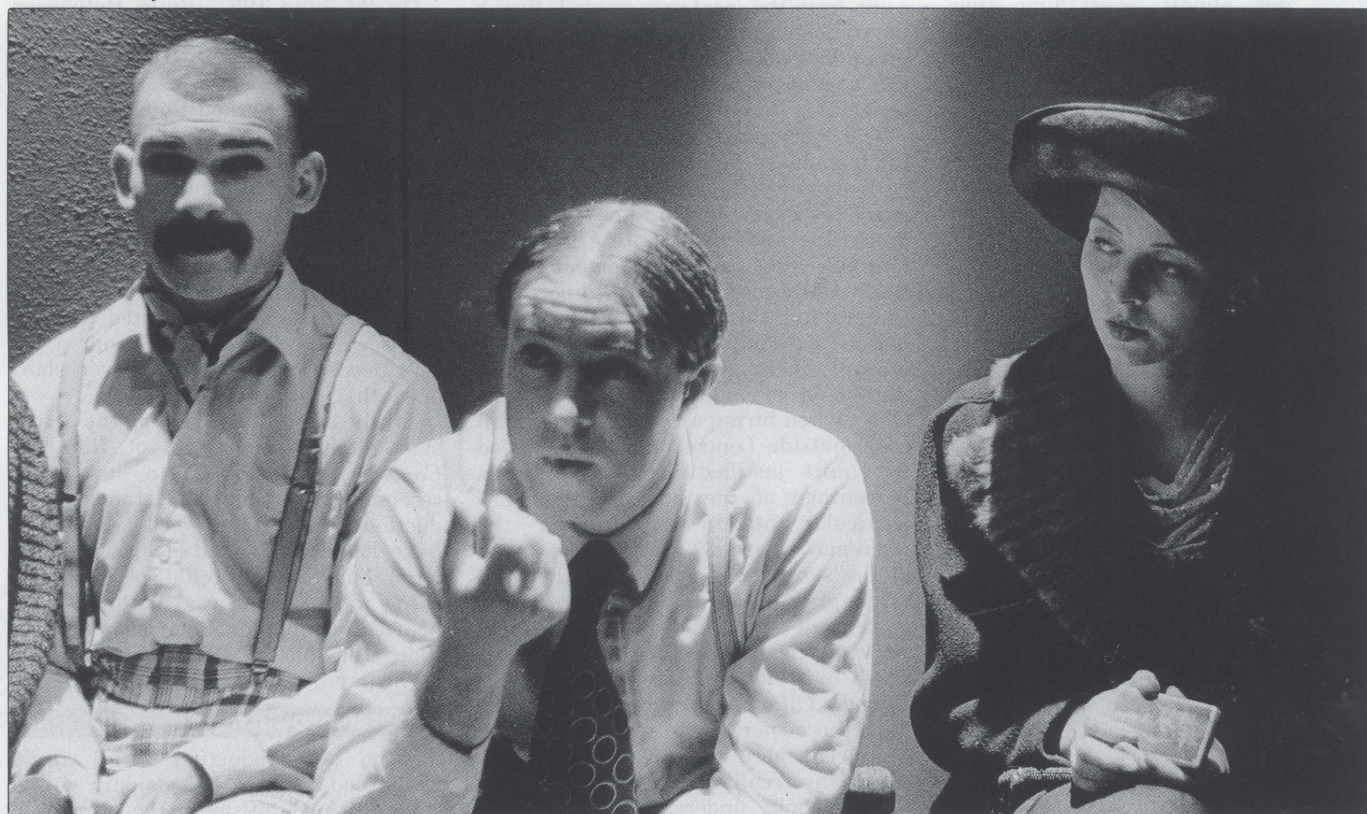
Build Hollywood had made applications for funding to the Arts Council, the local arts council and Greater London Arts. The likelihood of money being granted was, the group felt, quite good. Members and visitors to the project saw the work as being worthwhile on social and educational grounds as well as exciting film-making.

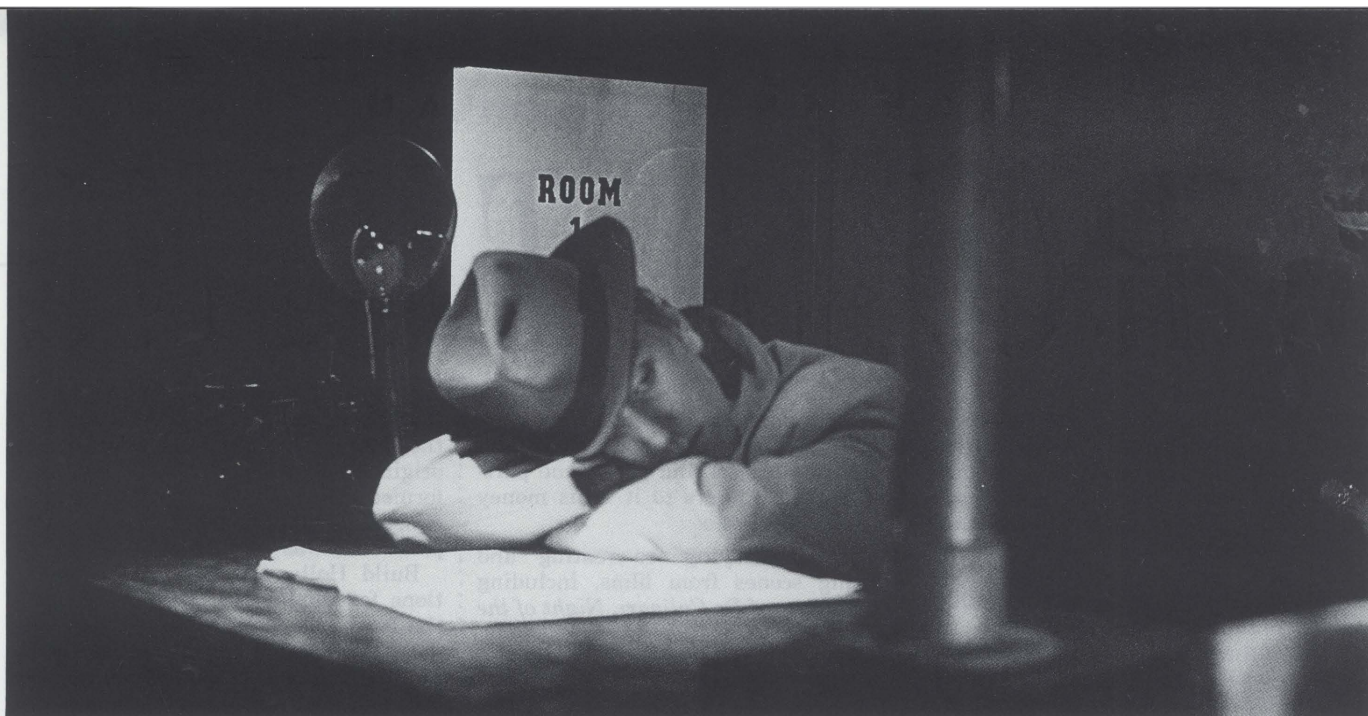
Pre-production

In the standard mode, until the start of pre-production there are unlikely to have been more than a handful of people creatively involved in the project. (Compare with the thirty or so people who were instrumental in devising *Rules of Comedy*.)

Once finance is in place, the producer, often in consultation with the director, will sign up heads of design, camera, sound, construction, etc. They would then work together to arrive at a final schedule. The script is timed, that is, a continuity/script person will calculate the length of the finished film. This preparation is regarded as essential if

Rules of Comedy: Nick Wale, Graham McCann, Tricia McGrath.





Gill Roth as Barmey, the reporter.

the production is to be kept within the allotted budget.

Draw up contracts, engage crews, hire studios, props, costumes, monitor spending... By now the producer would have a number of managers and assistants to arrange and activate these, and not a few thousand other things. All of which have to be paid for, fed, watered, insured and double checked as the case may be. For a six to eight-week shoot, ten weeks pre-production time is, according to the Association of Independent Producers' production pack, considered generous.

Cast, crew, production team; these and other roles were taken on by Build Hollywood members. Financial constraints meant that they had to beg, borrow and borrow-without-asking anything and almost everything they wanted. An unfunded film project is so much more vulnerable. Thankfully, there are a number of people willing and able to help.

Some months before the shoot, Build Hollywood wrote to hundreds of companies seeking grants-in-kind. Positive responses were received from a fraction of those contacted, but it was enough. They ranged from Youngmans Tower Hire (scaffolding) and Knobs & Knockers (door handles and room numbers) to Moët et Chandon (fake champagne, one crate). Most valuable, of course, was the support of film companies. Acton Film and Television Services lent the project a full, if semi-retired, lighting kit for six weeks. Samuelsons supported Build Hollywood from the beginning, both with grants-in-kind and good advice. This kind of help can depend on sympathetic individuals in the companies concerned. Support may well have been offered in the hope of future custom or publicity but, more often than not, goodwill is the deciding factor.

After letters had been sent out and 'interested' replies received (or not), most 'deals' were struck on the phone. Charm and/or a note of desperation in the voice can help. But persuasion,

persistence and, at times, bare-faced cheek are the more dependable routes to, not necessarily success, but survival.

Only weeks before their shoot, Build Hollywood heard that GLA would not support the project. They arrived at this decision without visiting to see work-in-progress. Build Hollywood paid them a visit. About thirty people crammed into the office of the director, Trevor Vibert, and asked for an explanation of the decision not to fund the project. 'My background is film...' he said, by way of introducing the subject of government cuts. The outcome of this direct action was a grant. The 25 quid took a few months to arrive, but the GLA discount at Studio Film & Video Laboratories proved useful.

The first hard cash for the project came from the local arts council. It was no coincidence that a member of the group had taken up an invitation to fill the vacant post of film officer on the council.

The principal photography was funded indirectly by Southern Arts, with money left over from a past project. This £1,500 began to pay for stock, processing and rush printing. Days before the shoot, an arrangement which Build Hollywood had made to borrow a camera fell through. When the group had to hire equipment for this and other reasons, there was of course every intention of paying, but limited means. Once, when hiring a camera from a film co-op outside London, Build Hollywood felt quite justified in only paying a percentage of the hire charge. That particular camera accounts for the 'lawn-mower atmos' that plagues much of the synchronised sound in the film. (This problem is characteristic of the equipment available to film-makers working in this sector of production, much of which is old or poorly maintained.) Often a cheque would be left with the owners of props and costumes borrowed, more as a gesture of thanks than any realistic form of security. Some people understandably insisted

that Build Hollywood take out insurance for borrowed props. Even then, savings were made where possible. One Build Hollywood insurance policy was such that if there was a claim made then the premium would have to be paid; if not, the cost would be waived.

Throughout the period of pre-production, the basic script was being storyboarded and redrafted. Detailed and life-size sets were in construction; there were to be seventeen in all. As with all jobs, everyone helped to build and decorate, regardless of gender, race, disability or a leading role in the film. Locations were sought and permission to use them granted. One day thirty-two feet of free tracking arrived. Someone's uncle was working on a James Bond movie...

On 22 June 1987, Build Hollywood began to shoot film.

▶▶ The Shoot

Cast and crew worked round the clock, sleeping on the roof of the disused school that was Build Hollywood's 'film studio'. Practically denied access to an ILEA phone, a 'production office' had to be set up in the Amoco garage across the road. Knocking up Samuelsons after midnight to get help fixing lame equipment; DIY catering; integrated working practices (no one excused from a job that needed doing for any reason short of death)...

All the same, it was during the actual shoot that the making of *Rules of Comedy* could be said to have most resembled anything like a standard production. Build Hollywood might not have had to fill out daily progress reports, but everyone could see what was going on. There was nothing half-hearted or amateur about people's attitudes; they just happened to be working for no pay.

▶▶ Post-production

At the post-production stage, Build Hollywood again parted company with a standard mode of production, certainly

in terms of the time it took. There were still radical creative steps to be taken with the film. At the editing stage, for example, it was realised that *Rules of Comedy* would best be structured as a short feature, something under an hour. That's what everyone began working towards. How many features have you seen that could lose a third of their length without adversely affecting the film, or perhaps improving it? In mainstream cinema it just can't be done. A feature has to be more than seventy-five minutes, or it won't get distribution and therefore won't even get made.

In the months that followed the studio shoot, Build Hollywood's first job was to negotiate a £5,000 loan with Lloyds Bank to begin paying for post-production. An angel had to be found, a guarantor. Build Hollywood also applied for, and was granted, £1,000 from the Arts Council. It was a fair bet that they would be more willing to support an 'avant-garde' rough assembly of *Rules of Comedy* than the finished film.

Throughout autumn '87, location shoots took place every weekend and on Wednesdays. On the Thames at Limehouse and Wapping; a steam railway in Sussex; woods on Hampstead Heath... Taking studio and location work

together, they shot more than seven hours of film.

In preparation for the editing, a member of the group built a cutting room at the Diorama, Regent's Park. This was furnished with a Steenbeck edit table lent to the group by Lusia Films. This facility has proved invaluable to Build Hollywood and other new film-makers.

By Easter 1988, editors had been interviewed and one chosen to work with Build Hollywood. An 'outsider', someone who could take an objective look at the material shot but who would be sympathetic to the style and content of the film. The editor was a student at the National Film and Television School. Their past work showed a good understanding of silent and surreal film forms. Colin Young, director of the school, had no objection to our working there so long as Build Hollywood didn't interrupt school work. A few members of the group just moved in for six weeks.

Editing was an intense and exciting period. It confirmed that the film needed an 'introduction': a scene that would account for the, albeit intended, oddities in the narrative. A second shoot was planned and took place in June 1988.

In Build Hollywood's shoes, any 'normal' producer (assuming he hadn't

already hanged himself) might think of dipping into the contingency fund. Having nothing of the sort, in July '88 Build Hollywood organised a 'Last Resort'. A benefit event at the Hackney Empire where Jonathan Ross and a host of other people helped to raise £1,500. A last resort at raising post-production finance? Sadly no. There was still a long way to go.

In the same month, £1,000 was gratefully received from Greater London Arts. Having seen a rough cut of the film and witnessed the survival of the project, they seemed more willing to offer support. Build Hollywood had applied for £3,000.

A fine cut of the film (with poor sound) was shown to an invited audience of people from funding bodies and others from the film industry. This event was, on the whole, disastrous. Build Hollywood concluded that you don't show anything to anyone outside a project unless it is perfect. No matter how 'qualified' the outsiders should have been to look at work-in-progress and make the necessary allowances, on the whole, they didn't bother. Ben Gibson from the BFI stayed behind for a constructive chat. The best thing that came out of the preview was making contact with a dubbing editor, whose involvement became all the more important when, in autumn 1988, Build Hollywood prepared for a final shoot, an ending for the film.

Rules of Comedy often uses silent film forms, so a strong musical score was clearly important. As with the editing, Build Hollywood sought the help of an experienced composer. It wasn't a case of letting an 'expert' loose on the film: members of the group who had all along been concerned with the music now worked with the composer to achieve the right mood and pace for each scene requiring music. The final recording was done with the help of students of the Royal Academy and other musicians who had become involved in the project. After an appeal in the national press, a studio in which to record the score was offered by Thames Television. They gave Build Hollywood one day at the cost of two sound engineers: £300 only! Luckily for Build Hollywood, at the end of a hard working day the engineers both said, very generously, that they wouldn't claim their wages.

For some weeks now, Build Hollywood had been in and out of Cine Lingual sound studios to do effects and replace dialogue. For this another bank loan was needed and therefore more sympathetic guarantors. The final shoot took place in November 1988, and featured a cameo role by Stratford Johns. After that, the ending was edited and the picture locked off. In early December 1988 they track laid twelve tracks of sync' sound, music, effects, replaced dialogue and atmospheres.

With the Lloyds loan pegged up to £6,000, Build Hollywood could start the mix for their film. To complete it, they had to go to the City; well, someone who looked as though he worked there. Who

Andrew Clarke (Weasel) and Monique Gibson (Mabel).



else could afford to lend you £1,500? A return of 50 per cent is expected but, as it says in the small print, this is subject to *Rules of Comedy* going into profit.

In 1989 the film was graded, the neg-cut, a short version of the titles shot (abbreviated in the name of economy, of course), and then the first answer print was struck two days before Build Hollywood were to show it at an event looking at the state of low-budget film-making in the UK. It was here that Roy Lockett made the comment quoted at the start of this piece. The event was called 'Build Hollywood Challenge Myths in Film-Making'.

The time it can take for the post-production of a mainstream film obviously varies according to the nature of the production. There are, however, fixed points such as the budget and the delivery date which, if overrun, can mean disaster for the project.

Picture and sound edited together; effects both optical and aural added; a musical score composed and recorded. Save perhaps for the extra shoots, the standard mode of post-production would have had to pass through all the same stages as *Rules of Comedy*. Admittedly, in one and not three cutting rooms. What the standard mode would have done in addition is build a marketing campaign. This would involve having trailers and promo reels distributed and notifying the press about the forthcoming attraction.

Not that Build Hollywood has been shy of publicity, far from it. Publicity, other people's, pays the interest on a number of loans. For the last two years Build Hollywood has run a fly-posting company. Run-ins with the fly-posting mafia, buckets and paste confiscated by the police, hours in the cells... Whatever happened to the film-making?

A Conclusion

It must be said that some people find it uncomfortable to watch *Rules of Comedy*. Not because they don't enjoy the songs or don't get the gags or can't admire the way it is lit. Nor are these people the least likely to see what Build Hollywood is 'playing at' in terms of style and content, far from it. The audiences I am referring to are representatives of funding bodies. They seem to have no context in which to view the film and, sadly, little inclination to create one. Ironically, individual representatives of all the funding bodies have said they like aspects of the film, and that they respect and applaud the principles and means by which it was made.

So why no support? Or why not enough? That *Rules of Comedy* is not commercial 'art-house' enough for the BFI, that it's not 'avant-garde' enough for the Arts Council, that it's not 'explicit in its social message' enough for GLA; none of this is surprising. Neither *Rules of Comedy* nor the project that made it was meant to sit neatly on any middle-class cultural bill of fare. The reason Build Hollywood is left with a £10,000 debt for a project which is widely recognised as significant in the field of film

and education in the UK, is that the goal posts have been moved. All the bodies which might have helped are redrawing their funding criteria in terms of the 'new realism', the market. This goes across the board of the grant-aided sector. The 'art-house', the 'avant-garde', the 'socially committed'; all have been measured up for their business hats (the Boyden Southwood Report, etc) and now are wearing them.

We see all films in a context, usually that dictated by mainstream cinema and all its concomitant values. In past years the BFI, the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations have been committed to questioning that context. They would argue that they still are, but that role has diminished. The mainstream view of the marketplace has cast a shadow over the grant-aided sector. A willingness to engage with what filmmakers are doing up and down the country has been exchanged for the offer of advice on how to tailor work for the marketplace. 'Where's your audience,' they all ask.

Build Hollywood went to the British Council, for example, seeking advice on how to enter festivals. They sounded interested, liked aspects of the film and the best suggestion they could make

was that Build Hollywood might organise an 'alternative festival'. No, that wasn't an offer to fund it; more like an offer to show them to the door. It's lazy and mindless not to take on board the idea that audiences have to be 'created'. And what, if anything, is the role of these organisations if not to introduce new film to new audiences? Perhaps they're too busy trying to do what the mainstream does much better, that is, give existing audiences what they want. That's not a criticism of mainstream cinema. I've never heard that sector claim to support a varied film culture in Britain.

At this point, Roy Lockett's words ring all the more true. If you 'go it alone', don't expect support. Unless you are making films fit for the marketplace, heaven help you because the BFI won't. Take it, then, that Build Hollywood should never have made a film, or should never have expected to get proper support for it.

Now that it has been made, they shouldn't expect to have it screened. Last year *Rules of Comedy* was shown to nearly three hundred people at the Ritzy Cinema and they seemed to enjoy it. Can anyone tell me what's wrong with that?

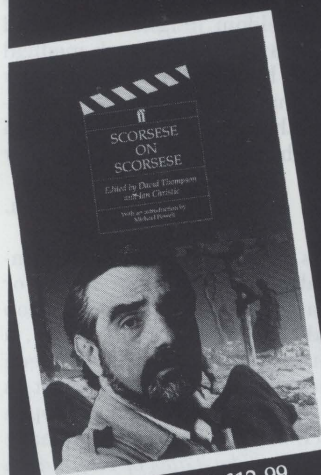
'How'd he know who to shoot? Simple. I'd be standing on a flower.' Elise Liversedge (assistant), Chris Cheshire (lighting cameraman), Rupert Townsend, Tim Horrox (director).



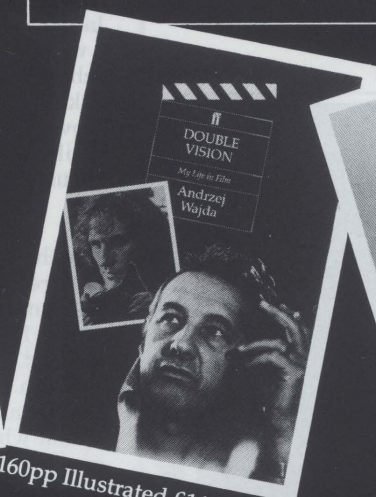


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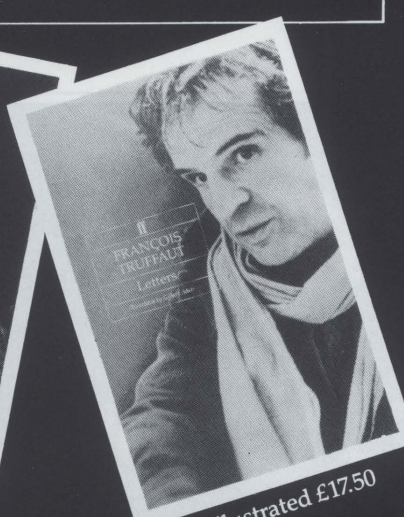
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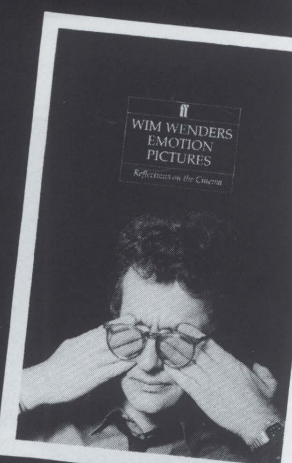
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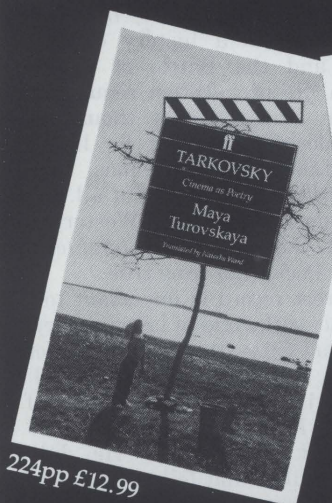
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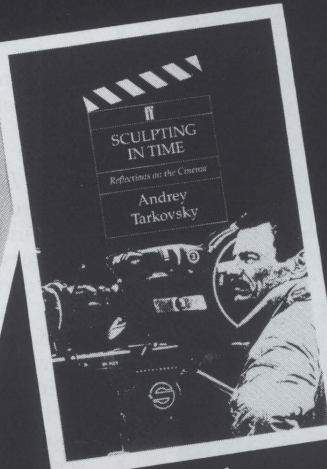
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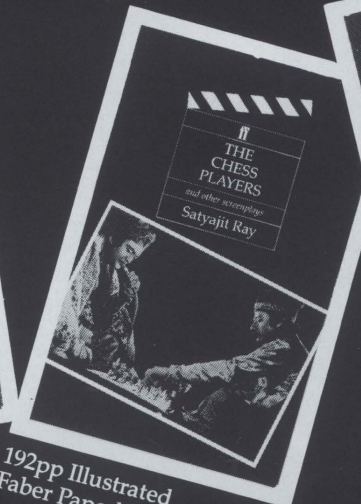
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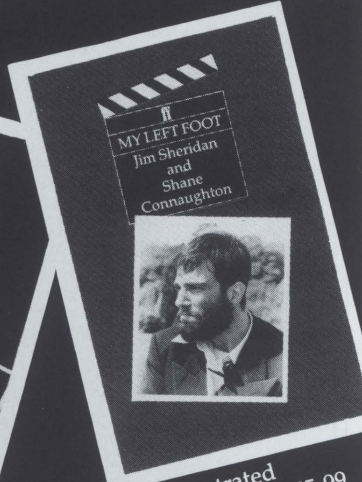
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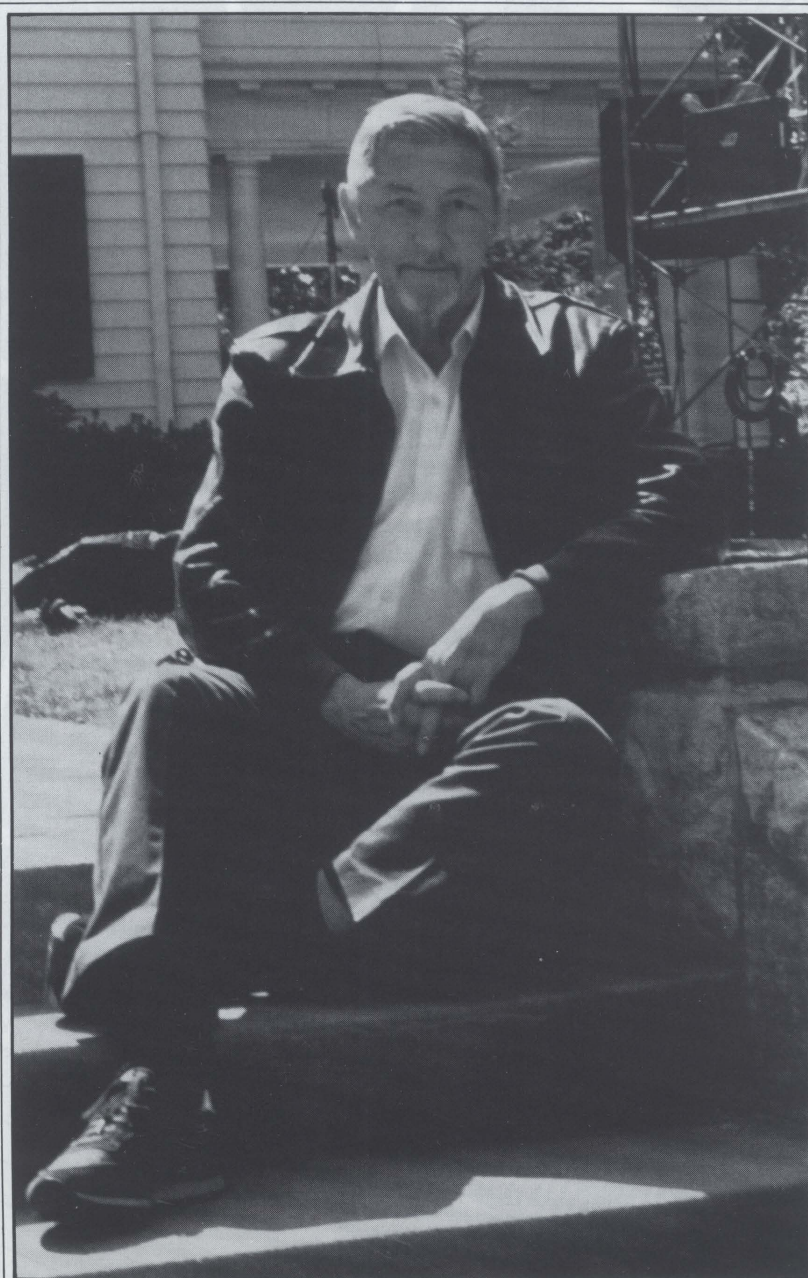


PHOTO MIKKI ANSIN

He [my father] was almost ambidextrous, meaning that he could manipulate a scalpel with either hand. This sounds like a parlour trick but in fact has some value for a surgeon; he need not contend with the obstacle of a patient's nose, for instance, while operating on an eye. Once or twice I accompanied him to Research [Hospital] where I put on a gown, washed my hands, and stood beside the table watching him work. Tonsillectomies were bloodily unpleasant and the stench of ether exhaled by the victim did not encourage me to become a doctor. Cataract operations, however, were clean and neat and did not seem difficult. I volunteered to do one, provided I might watch a few others, but he laughed—he seldom laughed—and said I would first have to go through medical school. Years later I surprised him by asking how many cataracts he had removed. He thought about this for a while and then said probably thirty thousand.

EVAN S. CONNELL

Which films did the writer Evan Connell remember? *The Seventh Seal*, for its immediate and convincing evocation of the Middle Ages; *Gates of Heaven*, a doomed three-cornered love story seen through the eyes of a tomboy and set in the Texas wheatfields of 1916, the open end of which could, for his money, have gone on forever; *The Tales of Hoffmann*, for the captivating performance of the ballerina Ludmilla Tcherina. Connell's most recent book, *Son of the Morning Star* (1984), is a history of General Custer and the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Its preparation required close work on scores—if not thousands—of source documents. Had he liked the movie taken from Thomas Berger's novel *Little Big Man*? Not at all. He had walked out, in fact. One Western came to mind, though. *The Gunfighter* with Gregory Peck, that rang true.

A correct record is important to Connell, who at the end of last summer was in Kansas City—the town in which he grew up and left, an unregretful 16-year-old, in 1941—for the filming of *Mr and Mrs Bridge*, an adaptation of his two best-known novels. He did not script the film, that fell to Ruth Praver Jhabvala, but he did, according to the director James Ivory, suggest a number of exact and useful emendations. At one point Mr Bridge, the correct Midwestern lawyer, is required to blow the foam off a glass of beer. 'He would never have done that,' Connell said, underlining 'never'. Paul Newman, however, was playing Walter Bridge, and the star, it seemed, liked the piece of business.

Connell began work on *Mrs Bridge*, which was first published in the United States in 1959, when he was an apprentice author living in Europe on a few dollars a day in the early 50s. A short

story, 'The Beau Monde of Mrs Bridge', was published in George Plimpton's literary journal *The Paris Review* in 1955. Two years later, this was reprinted in Connell's first book, *The Anatomy Lesson*, the title story of which, about an art-master and his class, sums up as clearly as any passage in his work the artist's inescapable duty. Connell subsequently completed the draft of a conventionally structured novel, *India Bridge*, before hitting on the form—a series of spare, beautifully drawn vignettes, each carefully labelled—which more than any other single factor gives *Mrs Bridge* its unforgettable singularity.

'You read and reread Chekhov,' Connell said, 'and you cannot see how he does it. With most authors you see immediately.' *Mrs Bridge* details the proprieties observed by a middle-class couple in Kansas City during the 1920s and 30s, and among much else the confinement felt by their single-minded son Douglas, several of whose exploits Connell took from his own boyhood and youth. The rituals of a conservative town are seen through the occasionally perplexed eyes of the trusting Mrs Bridge, a character who, as Paul Newman observed, 'never quite got it'.

Rooted though the novel is in parochial Kansas City—Mr Bridge frowns on Harry Truman defaulting on his debts, just as Connell's father did—its concerns, thanks largely to the author's tone, run much deeper. Connell combines a notable dispassion—his father's scientific dispassion, perhaps—with a capacity for compassionate understanding which wells up from time to time with a force made heartstopping by its unexpectedness. Few readers will forget the novel's closing pages. The greatness of *Mrs Bridge*, however, derives from a sensibility Connell shares with Chekhov: what at first appears pathetic, if not tragic, is often in reality touchingly and absurdly comic.

In 1969, Connell published *Mr Bridge*, the same story from a different point of view. 'I prefer it to *Mrs Bridge*,' Connell said. 'The form was established and I found the substantial Mr Bridge easier to write about.' The form of the Bridge novels—their distillation of small moments, their mastery of juxtaposition—has run over, it might be said, with added concentration into two other books, Connell's predominantly dark poetic meditations on the great ragbag of human experience, knowledge and faith, *Notes from a Bottle Found on the Beach at Carmel* (1963) and *Points for a Compass Rose* (1973).

There is something of the obsessive cataloguer in Connell, and something, too, of the dreaming beachcomber. The two books of poetry ('they strongly divide readers,' he lightly observes) reveal a formidably well-read mind and a personality with a particular fondness for small, inconsidered details, gestures of defiance or nobility. The cautious

values embodied by Mr and Mrs Bridge, those up to a point of his parents, are matched in Connell's later work, notably in the books of essays *A Long Desire* (1979) and *The White Lantern* (1980), by the sheer adventurousness of the roll-call of explorers, buccaneers and scientists whose bravery, achievements and folly he exactly records.

In Kansas City the news was all of the Newmans—though there was also a mild fluttering in the social dovecots that this scandalous book was being filmed at all. Joanne Woodward had wanted to play Mrs Bridge for some years, the first scheme having been to enlist the city's Hallmark Corporation as a backer. In the event, Merchant Ivory Productions took up the project with backing from Cineplex Odeon and Robert Halmi as executive producer. With Paul Newman as Mr Bridge, a piece of casting not originally anticipated, the package grew even sounder; Cineplex having worked with the Newmans a few years back on a version of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Evan Connell has Mr Bridge die suddenly in his office. Mrs Bridge is later trapped by silly mischance in her garage while outside the snow mounts ('Does she die or doesn't she? It's open'). It was rumoured that, having been killed off at the end of his last picture, Paul Newman—though not his wife—was somewhat chary of the original ending. Could not something be arranged? The first-draft script departed from the books, at which point Connell held out for something closer to his version. As shooting went on, with the author standing patiently on the sidelines ('On Sunday I wrote four small scenes Jim requested'), the matter had yet to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Last May, after many years in California, Evan Connell moved house to Santa Fe, New Mexico. He was in a sense following one of his own fictional creations, Muhlbach, a stoical, richly comic character who over the years has made several memorable appearances. In the novel *The Connoisseur* (1974), Muhlbach is bewitched by a pre-Columbian pottery figure and eventually abandons his career as a New York insurance man and moves to the Southwest. Connell had not been back to Kansas City in the fifteen years since the death of his father. Things have changed for the better, he said. 'When I was a boy there was nothing to do.' It was still, however, a small town. Walking past a crowd of stargazers, Connell heard his first name and stopped to shake hands. 'I haven't seen that man since I was fourteen,' he said.

Robert Sean Leonard, who came to attention in *Dead Poets Society*, was playing Douglas Bridge. 'Evan told me that there wasn't really much point in denying that he was Douglas and he has given me a few tips, about how he

spent his evenings in Kansas City, where he took a girl, how he draped a keychain from his belt, little things like that.' Accustomed to keeping his own company, the tall, politely undemonstrative Connell was, one felt, happiest listening to other people talk. He described with pleasure and slight astonishment a visit he received in Santa Fe from the actor Simon Callow, who has a small role in *Mr and Mrs Bridge* as the brash Dr Sauer. 'He just filled the room with laughter.'

Merchant Ivory had found two grand houses, in one of which, a copy of New York's Frick Museum, Mrs Bridge's small neat kitchen had been built. The owner of the house, Wade Williams, was a film-maker himself (*Midnight Movie Massacre*) and also co-managed Kansas City's one film studio, in the cutting-rooms of which *Mr and Mrs Bridge* was being edited. One afternoon Connell was to be found in the red-plush viewing theatre in the Williams' house listening to his host discourse on old movies and Kansas City's stars, Jean Harlow, Ruth Warrick, Joan Crawford.

Williams is currently working on a remake of Edgar Ulmer's *Detour*, for which he has fortuitously recruited the son of the original leading player Tom Neal, a bona fide Hollywood hellraiser who died in 1972 shortly after serving six years for the manslaughter of his third wife. The dark tale concerns a hitchhiker who to avoid false incrimination takes on the identity of a dead man. The veteran actress Susanna Foster, Williams said, has a small role.

As a young man, Connell debated whether to become an artist or a writer. He used to draw portraits of the stars from magazine photographs and then sent them away to be autographed. One of his subjects, it transpired, was Susanna Foster. She had signed the drawing and Connell had kept it until quite recently. 'It's a pity you don't still have it,' Williams said. 'Her signature is a rarity and to collectors it's worth about \$400.' Connell, who like Muhlbach has done his share of dealing in the art marketplace, ruefully concurred.

Although he had missed a possible \$400 for his autographed drawing, Connell was later cheered by news from his New York agent Elizabeth McKee that a long-planned deal to film *Son of the Morning Star* had at last been signed. The script, in which Connell has taken a keen interest, was by Melissa Mathison, the writer of *E.T.*, and had gone through six meticulous drafts. The principal backers are ABC Television and, according to Connell, the names of Kevin Kline and Sean Penn are being mentioned. 'I once imagined myself an actor in a Western,' Connell said. 'The cowboy at the bar who says, "They went thataway".'

J O H N P Y M

CODES of PRACTICE

THE CLASSIFIER

'If it offends others who can't get out of the way, then something is wrong...' DEREK MALCOLM questions JAMES FERMAN

There are some, often those who decry censorship most strongly, who think that the most sufferable kind of film censor is a butcher who simply cuts with a set of rules in mind, preferably those decreed by the government of the day and thus able to be changed by the democratic process. In Britain, that is not what we have. What we have got, for better or worse, is a decidedly tangled web of British compromise presided over by James Ferman, a former filmmaker who does not like to be called the censor at all. He would claim, with some reason, to be a man of taste and discernment where film is concerned, whose slightly unenviable job it is to operate a series of checks and balances that take into account the national mood of the day.

Ferman, whose official title is now Director of the British Board of Film Classification, has done the job for almost fifteen years. He went into it in the first place thinking that rather fewer years would be enough to bring the whole system up to date, at a time when it was beginning to look as though more liberal values would triumph over general mugwumpery.

In those days, his immediate boss was Lord Harlech, as President. There were four examiners and five office staff, and the total cost of the operation was roughly £70,000. Now the President is the Earl of Harewood, with Lord Birkett and Monica Sims as Vice-Presidents. Add Ferman himself, a deputy, an

assistant director, a principal examiner and 26 other examiners, plus office and technical staff. These 71 people work from a new office in Soho Square, where smoking is censored (though there is a smoking room somewhere upstairs for the recalcitrant addict) and where, at the latest count, some 400 films, 4,000 videos and 800 subscription television movies are dealt with in a year.

Categorisation is the name of the game, and quite delicate negotiations often take place to allow the stream of product into one category or another. Banning is not much on the agenda, except in extreme circumstances; when no classification could possibly be recommended and the law could be involved. Cutting is done not by the Board but by those who control the films or videos themselves.

The cost of all this—some £2m—is largely borne by those seeking to have their films classified. It is quite an expensive business (£6 a minute for the first hour, then dropping a bit), so that your average film costs around £600. And recent complaints by the smaller distributors that this was too much to bear on their frequently tiny budgets, and was beginning to affect the import of subtitled or experimental films, have led to some concessions being made.

Ferman doesn't say it himself, but it is clear that he has been a very shrewd empire-builder; and a tactician of some skill, too. All this has been accomplished at a time when the Government

of the day has given no very clear lead, and has seemed to be split two ways—between deregulation and the free market philosophy and the new moral puritanism of the right which would quite like to do some banning. Sometimes it has seemed that the Home Office is saying one thing and the Department of Trade and Industry another. The pitfalls are substantial. But Ferman hopes that, on the whole, the Board has not fallen into the trap his friend John Trevelyan stumbled into on occasion—that of speaking like a liberal but cutting Ingmar Bergman films.

There were two great test cases to deal with in 1988—Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, a palpably sincere film by the outstanding American director of his day, and *Rambo III*, the Sylvester Stallone epic. Had the Board got these wrong, there would have been considerably more trouble than there was. And in the same year, of course, the BBFC cleared the first major hurdle set for it by the Home Secretary under the Video Recordings Act, the classification of every video in the shops, including the hundreds of titles available to the public before the Act came into force.

As the President's annual report states: 'Three years had been allotted for examining some 12,000 videos, and by September 1988, when the final deadline had arrived, that figure had been exceeded. Some titles, of course, had never been submitted and these became illegal at that time, together with works officially rejected by the Board and others which required cuts as a condition of certification but remained on dealers' shelves in their uncut form.' One way or another, 1989 has seemed a quiet year in comparison, though the workload is still very considerable.

Ferman's attitude to the two controversial films of 1988 was instructive. It was that of a man who trusted the purposes of the Scorsese film, and knew very well that the critics would lambast

him if he showed that he didn't, and who preserved a certain scepticism in the face of *Rambo III* that anyone with a grain of sophistication would agree with. He wanted, in short, to do right between film as art and movies as entertainment, though he would freely have admitted, if one senses his views correctly, that it wasn't quite as simple as that.

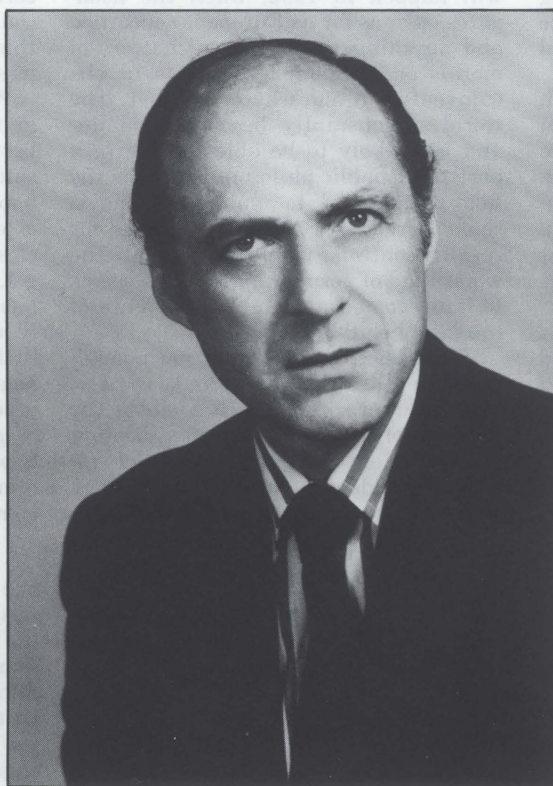
Tom Davies, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph*, traced links between the shootings at Hungerford, Higham Ferrers and Walsall and the Rambo films, talked about the 'wretched and rotten' video industry, called *The Last Temptation* 'appalling', commended Prince Charles for his attack on the 'incessant menu of utterly gratuitous violence' in films and on video and television and called for Mr Ferman to be sacked. He further suggested that 'the armchair academics in Soho Square' knew little or nothing about the 'deadly and destructive results of what they are allowing into this country.' This was not a lone shout. And there were not many liberal voices raised in defence of *Rambo III*, though Scorsese certainly had his supporters. It was a considerable test for both Ferman and the Board.

In the case of the Stallone film, Ferman and his examiners made a number of brief cuts for violence, bloodshed and the glamorisation of military weaponry, particularly the 'Rambo knife', which was already being sold to teenagers by many weapon shops in Britain. Once it was shorn of these details, even the very concerned local councillors who were invited to see the film at the Board's offices thought a '15' certificate was sufficient. But in the end Ferman played safe with an '18' certificate, even restoring some of the marginal cuts. Miraculously, there were no letters of complaint when it was released either in the cinema or later on video.

Asked now whether he thought the Rambo syndrome was actively harmful, Ferman says it is almost impossible to know, but that it certainly wasn't healthy in an increasingly violent era, during which many of the young clearly got their kicks from watching such films. The response of the Board, he says, ought to take on board people's fears about imitative violence but measure that on occasion against the artistic worth of a film.

The Scorsese film, which Ferman per-

sonally thinks is underrated even by those who thought that the fuss about it was absurd, was not cut at all but given an '18' certificate. The pressure to do something more than this was considerable, since the BBFC received no fewer than 1,870 letters and petitions about the film before it was released. Each was eventually replied to, in a way which did not underestimate the disturbance caused in the minds of those who felt the film was likely to be blasphemous, but as calmly as possible



James Ferman.

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stated that legal prosecution simply wasn't on. The Board did not receive a single letter of complaint after the film had been released. Such controversial films are the obvious reason for the various consultative committees the Board convenes. At one of these, Ferman remembers, Dr Anthony Storr, the psychiatrist, surprised him by saying that he thought Pasolini's contentious *Salo* was fit for cinema screenings but that he would not like certain patients to see it in the confines of their own homes. It was a principle Ferman began to consider more and more in the era of the so-called video nasty, during which the police raided the HMV shop in Oxford Street and the Prime Minister personally announced a crackdown shortly after

William Whitelaw had given assurances to Ferman that no such crackdown was likely.

No fewer than eight major pieces of legislation, including two attempts to reform the Obscene Publications Act, have had to be weathered during Ferman's tenure of office. And all this has been accomplished with some dignity, and not too much of the hypocrisy those opposed to censorship are apt to feel is the natural prerogative of organisations set up to protect us from our immoral selves.

'Personally,' says Ferman, 'I think we have done quite well, simply by being not too visible, but completely open with those who want to know how we work and what our decisions are. I believe that classification is a much better general idea than censorship, but that, in particular cases, censorship is clearly necessary—as in the case of child pornography. Right from the beginning, I have tried to distinguish between manners and morals. Child pornography is clearly immoral, swearing more or less a matter of manners.'

'In my opinion, what is obviously degrading to the vast majority of people, and certainly to the participants, ought to be stopped. In the matter of manners, I'll tell you what I mean. My son used to play football with friends in the garden and, as young people tend to do, there was a lot of swearing. I didn't much object, but there were some old people nearby who clearly did. So I felt completely justified in asking him to stop.'

'The point is that if it offends others who can't get out of the way, then something is wrong. And a society without manners is a society without consideration. A lot of people have said that they have a set of standards in their own homes which they ask their children to abide by, but which are often circumvented by what can be seen on television or video. Of course, the TV or video machine can be turned off, but frequently it is not until the damage has been done. So our decision to classify such material in a different way from the cinema seems to me justified, just as Dr Storr's view was in the more serious case of *Salo* and his disturbed patients.'

'There is no doubt whatever that we are living through a difficult age, when family relationships are breaking down and in some cases community feeling



simply does not exist. And I am inclined to believe that the violence we see around us is at least partly because of this. A local community policeman has told me, for instance, that one of the most common offences committed on the council estate he serves is that of young people stealing from pensioners. They do this, he maintains, without a hint of remorse and with no particular feeling for the people they rob—frequently at an age when they are too young to be prosecuted. He also says that when he first started as a policeman, the young and old of such neighbourhoods were almost in league with one another, and certainly very supportive of each other.

If this is even slightly to do with what is put before us in the visual media, then the work we attempt to accomplish at the Board seems justified. We have to keep the lid on the worst of what we see, if only by categorisation, and one of our great problems is that quite a lot of parents do not take the categories seriously.

On the other hand, I have had calls from parents saying that they had taken home videos of *A Fish Called Wanda*, and been surprised and offended by the language in the film. They'd seen John Cleese in *Fawlty Towers*, but not using the four-letter word. And since they did not allow their

children to swear in the home, they saw no reason why swearwords should be forced on them even in very popular comedies.

I know that I liberalised on language, and wonder whether that sort of thing derives from any decision we have made. I don't think so, but you can never be sure. I also wonder whether I have passed anything that has contributed to the more violent, uglier society that we live in.

Then, of course, I also wonder what will happen in 1992, when the floodgates open as far as Europe is concerned and anything we decide on matters of morals or manners is likely to be circumvented in one way or another. The world is constantly becoming smaller and less likely to be able to sustain a particular public philosophy such as the Board has tried to maintain. This is that there is a *prima facie* case for certain controls, if only to prevent the worst kind of pornography, which seems to hate women and to extol violence of the most horrible kind.

The basic trouble is that not enough research has been done and, until it has, different societies will go about the business of censorship and classification in completely different ways. For instance, Sweden, Denmark and Norway have widely differing systems, despite

what everybody thinks. And I would like to know which one actually works best and why. Without this knowledge, we are all stumbling around in the dark, even when thinking about the effect of the video nasties which caused so much trouble in the early 1980s.

Personally, and I am not necessarily speaking for anyone else on the Board, I feel that we are still living in the backwash of this period, which means that I do think they had a bad and evil effect. But I would still like to know for certain, through access to research. We could all steer a better course through this maze if we knew more and guessed less.

When Ferman was appointed in 1975 at the age of 45, Lord Longford, then best known as an anti-porn campaigner, said: 'I've never heard of him. I just hope he's a Christian, or even a Jew or a Mohammedan. But whatever, a man of strong moral opinions.' This last he got. But Ferman's time at the BBFC has seen strong moral opinions gradually replaced by a lot of pragmatism, a little expediency and a determination to be all things to all kinds of people. It is, if you think about it, a very British way of going on, but not the worst. 'One hopes one has a cool head,' he once remarked to the press. 'I certainly don't go round savaging bishops.' □

THE VIDEO IMAGE

'More business for the reputable dealer is what the Code is all about...' JULIAN PETLEY discusses video's new image

Last year the video industry in Britain celebrated its tenth birthday, and a decade of phenomenal growth. In December 1979, there were 230,000 video recorders in British homes; ten years later, there were 13.8m. To buy an EMI three-hour blank tape in March 1979 would have cost you £14.50; today this would purchase a three-pack of four-hour tapes and still leave change to spare. By October 1981, there were still only 6,000 video outlets in the UK, of which only half carried a sizeable stock. According to Derek Mann of the Video Trade Association, there are now 5,500 independent specialist dealers, 3,000 high-street multiples such as Woolworth's and W. H. Smith involved in

sell-through, and 17-20,000 outlets such as corner shops and garages which rent out videos on a relatively small scale.

In 1979, the notion of selling videos for as little as £6.99 would have seemed outlandish; today, within four years of its launch, this is reckoned to be a market worth £300m a year. It is estimated that 7m videos a week are now rented, that 30m will have been bought in 1989, and that the industry as a whole enjoys an annual turnover of some £1bn in terms of tape rentals and sales.

The industry has also had its problems. Chief among them have been piracy and the infant's flirtation with the dreaded 'video nasty', which besmirched its image in its early days. While

the piracy problem remains, the 'nasty' has been decisively wiped out, first by the application of the Obscene Publications Act, followed by the 1985 Video Recordings Act (which designated the British Board of Film Classification as the statutory body responsible for classifying and, where necessary, cutting or even banning the videos which fell within the remit of the Act), and topped off by the industry's increasingly rigorous self-policing. Is there a connection between the industry's improved image and its remarkable success? And, looking at it in a slightly different way, at what price has that image been achieved?

The most recent report from the British Board of Film Classification, that for 1988, leaves no doubt about the Board's answer to the first question. Speaking of the industry's 'increasing respectability', and referring to the Video Recordings Act as 'a system of consumer protection', it continues: 'We take some pride in the contribution made by the Board to the new, improved image... since by diligent attention to the contents of tapes, and since 1987 to their packaging and advertising as well,

we have helped this fledgling industry to put its past reputation behind it. If video can now take its rightful place as an important and prosperous sector of the entertainment industry, it is because of the quality and variety of so much of its recent family product, and the increasing professionalism with which it is presented to the public. All of us at the BBFC are pleased to have played a part in this development.'

Norman Abbott, Director General of the British Videogram Association (the distributors' body), is also in no doubt of the role the Act has played. At first the BVA favoured a self-regulatory classification scheme, and was supported in this by the then Home Secretary William Whitelaw. But once the statutory control of video was included in the Tories' 1983 election manifesto (apparently as a result of direct intervention by Mrs Thatcher), and once Graham Bright's famous Bill began its parliamentary passage to the accompaniment of a stream of ever-more lurid 'video nasty' stories in the press, the BVA saw that the writing was on the wall.

'We realised there was no point in having a headlong battle with the Government,' says Abbott, 'and that no one in parliament would support us. So we made a U-turn and decided to concentrate on making it as workable, effective and reasonable as possible. From that day, we've worked very collaboratively with the Home Office; and we have no doubt whatsoever that by far the biggest factor in giving video a better image has been the operation of the Video Recordings Act.'

One problem with the Act, according to both Abbott and Mann, is that it is not being enforced strictly enough, although they agree that things have improved since Trading Standards Officers were granted powers of enforcement in 1988. As Mann puts it, 'All our 2,000 members are happy that the Act is on the statute books. What they're singularly unhappy about is that it isn't being observed properly. The image of some shops hasn't changed one iota since the bad old days, and you only need one or two that are tacky and sleazy to affect the image of the industry as a whole. Every shop window is the industry's shop window.'

Not all breaches of the Act are the result of deliberate villainy. Many are caused by simple ignorance or laziness. An alarming number of non-specialist dealers, it seems, remain unaware of what is required of them under the terms of the Act, and there are still many *nth*-hand videos around which, at

some stage in their long lives, have been misclassified by lackadaisical dealers.

In its desire to improve its public image, the industry has also initiated its own systems of self-censorship in the forms of the Video Packaging and Video Advertising Review Committees. Norman Abbott explains: 'An unforeseen outcome of the Act was that, while it tamed and toned down the content of certain videos, it led to their packaging



**Members will
have a duty
when dealing
with their customers to
trade legally honestly
and truthfully.**

VSC Code of Practice

becoming more aggressively controversial and gory, as distributors tried to convey the idea that the films themselves were of undiminished strength. It was this change for the worse that led to the formation of the two committees.' And it's worth remembering that it was the gruesome *packaging* of tapes such as *Driller Killer*, *Cannibal Holocaust* and *SS Experiment Camp* that gave the video nasty panic its first impetus, in 1981, via a series of complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority. I can certainly remember my first encounter with a *Driller Killer* display in a now-defunct shop in Charing Cross Road, and wondering how long it would be before the guardians of public morality pounced.

Norman Abbott describes the Video Packaging Review Committee as 'typically British', indicating its characteristic mix of voluntarism and coercion. It was formed late in 1987 by the BBFC at the request of the BVA. As the BBFC's James Ferman explains, 'The BVA suggested that we should withhold certification of tapes until the packaging had been approved. However, our lawyers said that we couldn't do this, since certification is statutory. I then talked to the Home Office and they said we could institute the scheme only on a voluntary basis, that is, if the company is *willing* to have the certificate withheld pending approval of the packaging.'

The Committee includes distributors,

the Advertising Standards Authority and senior officers of the BBFC. It has Home Office support and the scheme has been accepted by the Office of Fair Trading as a registered restrictive trade practice. A logo indicating the approval of the VPRC is compulsory for all the tapes of distributors who have chosen to join the scheme, and Trading Standards Officers have ruled that this mark constitutes a trade description in the meaning of the Trade Descriptions Act, 1968, in that it is an indication of testing and approval by an authorised body. Some shops, according to James Ferman, are refusing to stock material that does not carry the logo.

Norman Abbott sums it up: 'The member of the scheme waives his rights and accepts a greater degree of restriction than the Act lays down; but there's no doubt that if anybody chose to challenge the system and insist that his tape be certified purely in terms of the content of the movie, and refused even to show his packaging to the BBFC, then he could get a court order requiring the BBFC to consider his tape for certification.'

Just how strongly the BBFC leans on distributors to join the scheme is a matter of some dispute. Deputy Director Margaret Ford is on record as saying that membership is 'highly recommended'; but Elephant Video's Barry Jacobs (who had problems with the cover of Fulci's *The House by the Cemetery*, as well as losing more than four minutes in cuts on top of the cinema-version cuts) claims he was told by the Board that his films wouldn't be certificated unless he submitted his covers to the VPRC.

And once the distributor is in the scheme, the tendency to self-censor is strong, as Norman Abbott confirms: 'If the distributor comes up with some controversial packaging and the VPRC says, "No, we don't like that, there's far too much blood on the axe" or "You can't have that woman tied to a tree," it has to go back to the applicant, more artwork has to be done, and then it's resubmitted. All this causes delay and expense, but this is undoubtedly the effect the scheme is supposed to have. It encourages companies to submit material which they think will go through.' He adds: 'I've no doubt that the BBFC has penalised people who haven't gone into the scheme, by holding up their material. But if you play ball with the system, accept the Board's judgment and don't make a fuss, then you get better treatment.'

The Video Advertising Review

Committee works in a similar fashion. It comprises Laurie Hall of the Video Standards Council, representatives from the three video trade magazines, the ASA, the BBFC, and a changing complement of three video distributors. Like the VPRC, the Committee meets every Monday to look at the artwork for all the advertising which is to appear in the three trade papers for '15' or '18' movies (unlike the VPRC, which considers all packaging).

In video shops themselves, one finds a similar concern with image. The major initiative here has been the Family Code which, the VTA handbook tells members, 'strengthens your bond with your customers and helps create that all important confidence.' It continues: 'This is a carefully thought out campaign designed to change the public image of video. For the dealers, the Family Code is going to attract more and more customers to the shops that have been awarded video's "badge of merit". . . More business for the reputable dealer is what the Code is all about.'

This brings us to the nub of the matter. For, in spite of the industry's remarkable growth over the last ten years, many within it clearly feel that there is room for a great deal more. As Derek Mann pointed out to me, only 40 per cent of those with video recorders rent pre-recorded tapes—this leaves a total of some 7½m homes into which pre-recorded videos have not yet penetrated. 'We must persuade those people that video films are good and inexpensive family entertainment. Of course, families are not the only area that we want to reach, but they are an important one.'

Again, Norman Abbott agrees: 'I don't think someone whose appetite runs in the *Friday the 13th* vein would be deterred from going into a shop which featured a lot of Disney product. But someone who wants a Donald Duck film might well be put off a video shop filled with posters dripping blood. There's still quite a long way to go before we get it 100 per cent right, but we do feel we're going the right way when we look at how the UK market has continued to boom, and compare it to some parts of Europe, where the video market is actually contracting.' And just in case we still haven't got the message, the BVA embarked on a £100,000 publicity campaign last February to emphasise the positive side of video, pointing out that a 'clean business' and a 'growth industry' go 'hand in glove'.

Last July the video industry finally set up the Video Standards Council, something which James Ferman had urged as long ago as 1982. It is headed by Laurie Hall, a former managing director of CIC Video, and represents all segments of the industry. Its aim is to continue to improve the industry's image, to avoid the risk of further legislation, and to implement a Code of Practice. 'Membership of the Council



**Members must
at all times
refrain from
trading in illegal or
counterfeit product.**

VSC Code of Practice

isn't compulsory,' says Laurie Hall, 'but we want to create a kind of ABTA image, so that membership of VSC will be seen by consumers as identifying responsible dealers. This will probably take two or three years, and it's aimed at customers as well, like the lady who thought an "18" indicated the film was 180 minutes long, or the irresponsible parents who send their children down to the corner shop to rent "15" or "18" tapes for them.'

While it would be easy to accuse the video industry of over-enthusiastic self-censorship in the pursuit of financial gain, this would be to underestimate the traumatic effect of the ferocious

pastings which it took from the press during the 'nasties' panic, and which still surfaces from time to time. It would also be to ignore the considerable, if relatively subtle, pressure exerted upon it by the Government. As Norman Abbott points out, it was one such application of pressure which led to the setting up of the VSC: 'We were summoned to see the Home Secretary on 29 November 1988. He started off by saying that we appreciate the things you've done so far, and we can see they're having some beneficial effect, but there are still these loopholes. Then he began to lean on us—we've grown accustomed to it over the years.'

He said that unless we could give him some fairly encouraging assurances about certain aspects of the operation of video which bothered them, they would be minded to legislate in the fullness of time, or they might find some private member who had come high in the ballot and was willing to take on a Bill incorporating some improvements they would like to see. But naturally they wouldn't contemplate any of this if they were satisfied that we had cleared up these perceived problems.' These included the fact that some video shops were playing age-restricted films or trailers, or that '15' trailers for '18' films were going out with '15' videos and so whetting young appetites for forbidden fruit. It is to such earth-shattering matters (among others) that the VSC will have to address itself.

Even the BBFC, usually regarded by libertarians as the villain of the piece, has to live with the knowledge that it is seen by some Tories (especially Sir Bernard Braine) as dangerously liberal, and that it could be de-designated as the video classificatory body. James Ferman steadfastly denies any Government pressure, but one wonders what would happen if he passed *The House on the Edge of the Park* and *The New York Ripper* in quick succession, especially in a decade in which a Home Secretary has shown no scruples about leaning very publicly on the BBC (at the start of the *Real Lives* affair).

Finally, have there been any losers in this clean-up process? Has the public been denied a wider range of tapes that they might otherwise have seen? Norman Abbott certainly thinks so: 'There's no doubt that the people who lose out under this whole system are those who want to see material of an explicit sexual or violent nature. But, rightly or wrongly, the authorities, with our collaboration, take the view that far



THE FAMILY CODE

1. We do not trade in uncertified films.
2. We will not supply films to young persons who have not attained the required age.
3. We will not deal in any illegal films of any sort.
4. We care about our reputation and we believe in offering the highest standards of service.
5. We will ensure that you will not be exposed to any material that a reasonable person may consider offensive.
6. We operate in accordance with a registered Code of Practice which provides additional safeguards for the rights of our customers.

Your safeguard for all the family!

more damage would be done were this type of material and its packaging and advertising freely available to all. And though it is restrictive and a curtailment of liberty, I do think, from a sheer economic point of view, that this system is the reason why our market has continued to boom.'

A look at the BBFC Report for 1988 reveals that in that year 5 videos were banned, 26.7 per cent of all '18s' were cut, 7.2 per cent of '15s', 4.9 per cent of 'PGs' and 0.8 per cent of 'US'. Since the Act came into force 25 videos have been banned, 28.9 per cent of all '18s' have been cut, 6.7 per cent of '15s', 5.1 per cent of 'PGs' and 1.1 per cent of 'US'.

According to Robert Starks of Colourbox (whose *Bad Taste* escaped unscathed on video, although the packaging nearly fell foul of the VPRC), 'There is certainly a narrowing range of choice in the horror field. Pretty soon all we'll see on the shelves are industry-approved videos in industry-approved sleeves. Britain now has the most restrictive video market in the world.' It's also of some significance in the present context that Norman Abbott felt he had to persuade Colourbox staff not to turn up for the 1989 British Video awards in *Bad Taste* outfits, in case it was felt to be in... bad taste.

It might also be asked whether the Video Recordings Act and the various examples of self-regulation have acted as any form of economic brake on the industry. Has it suffered, for instance, from the BBFC's unwillingness to pass such former moneyspinners as *The Exorcist*, *Straw Dogs* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*? What of the cost and time of the classification process? James Ferman readily admits that at times the Board has been understaffed because it has underestimated the vast number of tapes with which it has to deal. Recently, however, this situation seems to have improved, though Norman Abbott reports some complaints from his members about the Board's 'inconsistency, unpredictability and lack of guidance'. 'They also quibble about the uncertainty which seems to bedevil some titles, the ones James Ferman has put in his pending tray and says he's not prepared to decide on at the moment. They find that a bit annoying, because they have paid money for the UK video rights, and they're not sure if they are going to get any return.'

Thirdly, has the operation of the Video Recordings Act and the other measures contributed to the concentration of the video industry? That there

has been a degree of concentration is certain—a hard core of 30 distributors, of which 25 are BVA members, now accounts for about 95 per cent of the rental market. There are some 40 or so more distributors in operation, but this figure includes bodies such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which are clearly not in the business of video features.



Members must not at any time use video material including posters and displays of a sensitive nature in such a manner as to cause offence.

VSC Code of Practice

At the beginning, of course, there was a mushroom growth of small companies, which has now largely died away. As Norman Abbott points out: 'In the first year or two of home video the majors didn't think there would be a market for their product in pre-recorded cassette form and thus didn't make it available; they were opposed to the whole idea and simply wished it would go away. This meant that this new medium was open to non-mainstream cinema material, acquired by a host of small companies which occupied the vacuum caused by the majors' refusal to become involved. This was poor quality, cheap stuff they had picked up from obscure corners of the globe, and it was this that caused all the problems.' In fact, Warners was the first of the majors to enter the field (in July 1980); the last was RCA/Columbia (April 1982).

Talking to the various industry figures, it is hard to avoid the impression that, on the whole, they prefer to deal with the majors, though few are as forthright as Norman Abbott. 'I find the major distributors more self-regulatory, more respectable and by and large more responsible, because of their large investment in the industry, than some fly-by-night outfit which is out to make a quick buck and then run for it. It's they who tend to come out with the less-pleasant product, which they then advertise and package in a controversial way. They cause all my problems; Disney doesn't.'

Some smaller distributors certainly feel they are now at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the majors, and that the regulatory machinery doesn't exactly help. As Colourbox's Robert Starks puts it, 'As an independent you do have to rely on strong images to create an impact with your packaging. The majors have all the well-known titles and stars—they could put out a big title in a white sleeve and still do well.' Barry Jacobs of Elephant Video complains, 'The small companies must offer what the majors don't, but this is the kind of material which seems to fall foul of the Act. The majors get away with distributing horror films, because people think they're classy. Woolworth's and W. H. Smith have said they won't touch something like *The House by the Cemetery*, even though it has been so heavily cut, though they're quite happy to take horror films from the majors. That is hardly fair competition.'

Finally, it's perhaps worth asking whether the pursuit of the 'family audience' is really the best way forward for the industry, in an economic or any other sense. After all, as Rank knows to its cost, it didn't exactly save the British film industry. It is hard to know whether the industry is playing a hunch, or whether there is hard, reliable evidence.

A look at the BMRB rental charts for May-July 1989 is not much help on this score. Comedy comes out top at 32 per cent of all rentals, followed by thrillers at 19 per cent and horror at 12 per cent. Pop videos score 1 per cent and children's films 6 per cent. If one turns to video sales, however, it's quite interesting to note that children's films come top at 24 per cent, followed by pop videos at 12 per cent. (And did you know that BBC Enterprises' top-selling video is *Watch With Mother*?) Much of this material for young people and children, however, can hardly be classed as feature films.

In any event, the industry has decided that its future prosperity depends on establishing and maintaining a salubrious image. The vigour with which it has gone along with the Video Recordings Act and pursued its own forms of self-regulation suggests that, even if the Government had not intervened, the industry would almost certainly have instigated its own similar 'voluntary' scheme. After all, it is precisely such a scheme which the BBFC, wearing its non-statutory hat, administers for the film industry, and that is one of the most stringent systems of film regulation in Western Europe. ■

as it was

· IN THE ·

BEGINNING



'In 1989, *Lawrence of Arabia* was finally the film David Lean wanted it to be.'

..... ALAN STANBROOK

Restoration is such a film buzzword of the 1980s that it has become difficult to see it in perspective. Everything, it seems, that was ever cut, or spoiled, or which has physically deteriorated with time, is a candidate for the movie buff and the archivist to attempt to reinstate.

In principle, this sounds an admirable ambition. But in practice the results are variable and sometimes even questionable. Kevin Brownlow's heroic achievement in bringing Abel Gance's *Napoléon* back to life on something like its original epic scale has actually set a dangerous precedent. It has encouraged others not to put films back to their pristine state but to a state that no one ever intended. The notion that everything should be made complete, no matter what its condition, has led on more than one occasion to the production of hybrid prints—part motion picture, part still, part colour, part black and white—that are really mutations and in some respects less satisfactory than the commercially cut versions with which, over the years, we have become familiar.

We ought to ask ourselves, each time a fully 'restored' or 'improved' copy is unveiled, whether it is in fact the real thing or some malformed curio whose rightful place is in a museum rather than a cinema. Let's consider three rather well-known examples of the restorer's art which have resulted nevertheless in products of debatable value.

Lost Horizon, Frank Capra's 1937 film of the James Hilton novel, at first ran three hours. It was seen in that form only at a sneak preview in Santa Barbara and when the audience voted with its feet in the first half hour, Capra immediately axed some 16 minutes, including a lengthy exposition. Further cuts were subsequently made, reducing the film to 132 minutes for the official premiere at New York's Globe Theatre in March, 1937.

None of that discarded material exists today. It has long since decomposed. But 132 minutes was only a way station towards even shorter versions. Nine more minutes were cut within weeks of the premiere to make it easier for exhibitors to squeeze in an extra show each day; another seven minutes were removed for general release; and by the time the film was re-released in 1942 the running time had been trimmed still further to 108½ minutes. Eliminated, among other things, was an embarrassing scene early in the film in which Robert Conway (Ronald Colman) spells out his pacifist philosophy. It is so jejune that it makes nonsense of the suggestion that he is being seriously considered as Britain's next Foreign Secretary, and of course in wartime it was completely unacceptable.

In 1969, the American Film Institute acquired Columbia's last remaining nitrate vault print of the movie (which turned out to be the 116-minute 1937 release version) and the idea was mooted of trying to reconstruct the original film. But which original film?

The 132-minute one, the 123-minute one or the 116-minute one that the public at large had seen?

Budget constraints at the time made this an academic question, but by 1974 the exercise became feasible and the AFI elected to go ahead on the principle that everything that could be found should be restored. By 1975, it already had a workable print running 116 minutes; four years later, using material from a 16mm Canadian TV print, which included the pacifist speech, other material from a negative held by the British Film Institute and from a complete soundtrack for the roadshow version (also held by the BFI), the film had been bumped out to 125 minutes. Ultimately, a print was cobbled together corresponding after a fashion to the longest commercial version of 132 minutes. But it could not be said to be the same film that New York audiences saw in 1937. The soundtrack was complete, but the images for seven minutes of the film were not. So it was decided to cover the missing scenes with the use of production stills and freeze-frame shots.

As a result, *Lost Horizon* now lurches at times from movie to photographic album. At certain points the action stops dead, leaving the soundtrack to continue over a frozen image. The question also remains whether what has been restored was uniformly worth salvaging. One scene in particular, in which Thomas Mitchell gets drunk on the local wine of Shangri-la and launches into the story of Goldilocks for the benefit of a group of children, is especially arch and brings the narrative to a grinding halt. This is one of the scenes for which only production stills exist and dialogue is covered by the clumsy device of splitting the screen into two portraits.

Even Robert Gitt, preservation officer at the film archives of the University of California at Los Angeles, who advised the AFI in the restoration of this 132-minute version, seems to have had second thoughts about it. 'In some ways,' he said, 'it isn't as good as the 116½-minute version we came up with in 1975 or the 125-minute version later on. It runs a little long because some scenes are unnecessary. I think the ultimate version may be a re-edited one running about two hours.' In other words, having seen the film restored to a form somewhat similar to the one that originally played in New York, Mr Gitt now believes the ideal version may be more like the shorter one the rest of the country saw at the time.

These reservations inevitably raise a question over the value of the exercise. If even the architect has doubts, was the project worth undertaking? Shouldn't the AFI have settled for the version which works best instead of pressing on in search of an integral one? And may not a studio-edited version sometimes save a director from his own long-windedness and excess?

These caveats apply also to the restored prints of the Judy Garland version of *A*

Star Is Born. It originally ran 181 minutes, but had been cut by roughly half an hour after its 1954 premiere and had never been seen in Europe in a version longer than 154 minutes. Ronald Haver, no less committed a movie buff than Kevin Brownlow, made it his business and pleasure to attempt to track down the missing footage and put the musical back into the shape that its first audience had enjoyed. By diligent research, he ultimately located all the soundtrack but only 20 minutes of usable footage to cover the scenes cut for general release.

These include one of the best numbers in the film ('Lose That Long Face'); but like Robert Gitt on *Lost Horizon*, Haver was forced to plug gaps with stills—sometimes black and white ones, which are especially disrupting in a colour movie. Like *Lost Horizon*, *A Star Is Born* sacrifices elegance to what passes for completeness.

But even at 176 minutes, *A Star Is Born* is not complete. It is five minutes shorter than the original production because Haver exercised editorial judgment of his own. As he describes it in his book on the making and remaking of the film, 'to maintain audience interest throughout the stills, we were forced once again to edit the soundtrack... This was something we had to do several times throughout the stills sequences, and it accounts for the difference in running time between the original release version of 181 minutes and our reconstruction.'

So for Ronald Haver, no less than for Robert Gitt, authenticity became a chimera. In the end, the restorer has to use his discretion about what will play and what will not. The result, inevitably, is an uneasy compromise between art and commerce. Despite its virtues, the Haver version of *A Star Is Born* is only an approximation to the 1954 release. Like *Lost Horizon*, it is more suited to the film student than to the filmgoer.

But if you *are* a film student, which version can you regularly see today? The answer is neither. The version of *A Star Is Born* that you buy on video from most retail outlets is substantially the Ronald Haver reconstruction. But it is not processed in CinemaScope proportions—Warner Brothers wouldn't wear that on video, despite Haver's pleas. So what you see is only, as it were, one panel of the widescreen images that George Cukor and cameraman Sam Leavitt had so carefully composed. On film and in 'Scope, the Haver version remains in the vaults for airing only on special occasions.

Meanwhile, the shorter studio version still survives and is periodically televised. When the BBC showed *A Star Is Born* again last summer, it went back to the general release print. That is not generally available on video but many will have recorded it off the air and clandestine copies doubtless circulate. This, too, of course, is not in 'Scope proportions and it opens up another possibility. Thanks to panning and scanning, may it not contain shots and

compositions that are quite different from those in the Haver version even in scenes that they both have in common? So it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to say with confidence that he or she has actually seen *A Star Is Born*.

Similar problems affect Robert Gitt's work on the restoration of the Rouben Mamoulian film *Becky Sharp* for UCLA. *Becky Sharp*, as we know, was the first film shot in three-strip Technicolor, but for more than forty years no one had seen it in the colours Mamoulian intended. All 448 of the original prints were thought to have perished and, eight years after the 1935 premiere, rights had been sold to a company

removed before the dialogue could even be heard.

In the end, Gitt and Dayton had a unified print of which about three-quarters was as good as new. Sixty-four minutes were back to their full three-strip glory; 10 minutes still existed only in two colours and the last reel was frankly a mess, with hues and shades wandering all over the spectrum from shot to shot.

This was the version that many people saw in 1984 and 1985. They marvelled that so much of the 50-year-old movie, which had been thought irretrievably lost, was still intact. Realistically, however, the Gitt/Dayton *Becky Sharp* was still a poor relation of

the previously missing Technicolor footage and generally to freshen up the colour quality of the last reel. But not all the Roman print was usable and even now *Becky Sharp* remains a flawed print.

That is not the case with the restored version of Visconti's *The Leopard*, which originally ran 205 minutes in 1963, was cut by the director to 186 minutes and then cut again without his approval to 161 minutes, dubbed into English and reprocessed in DeLuxe colour. The negative of the original Technicolor film, fortunately, was never lost. It remained intact in Rome and when, twenty years later, Twentieth Century-Fox sensed money in a reissue, it was a



Judy Garland in one of the scenes cut from *A Star Is Born*.

called Film Classics. To save money, Film Classics subsequently released the film not in the expensive Technicolor process but in the inferior Cinecolor, which could reproduce only two primary colours. Cuts, too, were made, shortening the film from 84 to 66 minutes. By 1958, only one cut black and white print survived on 16mm.

With the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Mr Gitt and Robert Dayton of YCM Laboratory were able to set about piecing the picture back together like a jigsaw puzzle, lifting sections from many different prints, none of which was complete or usable as a whole. There were colours missing, reels missing and some were encrusted with a thick layer of electronic hiss and crackle that had to be

the Mamoulian original. Gratitude has to be tempered by a nagging feeling that restoration work like this is turning a popular art into an academic exercise. The fact is that *Becky Sharp*, *Lost Horizon* and *A Star Is Born* can no longer, after restoration, be shown commercially to mass audiences. They don't work any more as movies but as objects of study and research. With *Becky Sharp* that may be better than nothing, but something is lost when a film parts company with its public.

Fortunately, *Becky Sharp* has since been further improved by the discovery in the archives of Italy's Cineteca Nazionale of the last surviving print from the first batch of 448 struck when the film was new in 1935. This has enabled UCLA to splice in segments of

fairly simple matter to print it up. But wonderful though it was to see the missing scenes and the whole film in its true colours at last, there were losses as well as gains. The Italian soundtrack robs Burt Lancaster of his voice and his performance loses a dimension. For Lancaster's work alone, one wishes that somehow the otherwise inferior Fox cut could exist alongside Visconti's.

Rather more ambitious is the 'clean-up' process to the *Alexander Nevsky* soundtrack (discussed in the autumn issue of SIGHT AND SOUND). Anyone who has seen an old print of this film recently will agree that the soundtrack leaves much to be desired. Prokofiev's music sounds tinny and the musicians are evidently a small band of what would now be called

sessions men rather than a tip-top orchestra. At which point, enter John Goberman, an American TV producer with a revolutionary idea. Why not strip out the music and have a live orchestra under a world-class conductor play it in sync with the film?

Let's not be too purist about this. There is nothing sacrosanct about the efforts of those fifth-rate Soviet musicians of 1938. But the score has undergone some modifications to enable a live orchestra to play it—especially in the battle on the ice—where the music is deliberately repetitive. It was probably achieved by a looping device. Real musicians, required to play the same notes over and over again, would soon lose patience and concentration; so Prokofiev's original music at this juncture has been replaced by orchestral bridge passages from other works by the composer—notably from the Fifth Symphony and from the *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella* ballets. Behind the credit titles, which ran silent in Eisenstein's film, part of the *Alexander Nevsky Cantata* is introduced. The cantata, of course, though drawing on themes and melodies in the soundtrack, was composed by Prokofiev later and contained passages not in the film.

Does any of this matter? Probably not, so long as it is viewed as a special event and those who wish can still have access to the original. As with colorisation, harm is done only if the new version leads to the disappearance of an original that others may prefer to see and hear. There's no risk of that with *Alexander Nevsky*. On film and video it can still be bought or hired in the form Eisenstein and Prokofiev intended. Those who want it that way, however, will miss two of the big pluses of the Goberman version. To match his new 'soundtrack' he went back to the original negative to strike a better-looking print than has been seen for years and he took a leaf out of the opera house book, replacing disfiguring subtitles with separately printed titles projected below the screen.

The unique feature about the new *Alexander Nevsky* is that it marks the first time that a sound film has enjoyed the musical attentions hitherto reserved for silent films. Silent, of course, is a misnomer because even before the days of sound on film, cinema performances were routinely accompanied by music—either a single pianist or, in the big cities, an orchestra. They usually played what they liked, since few films came with an individual score.

The scores that Carl Davis has prepared for a lengthening list of silent movies—from *Napoléon* and *Intolerance* to *Ben-Hur* and *Greed*—are in a direct line of descent from this tradition. One may find them musically pompous and overblown, but no one can deny that this is how audiences in the 1920s, at least in capital cities, would have seen these films. Nor can one object to the way the Davis scores have been bonded to the movies when they are shown as

Thames Silents on television. You don't, after all, have to listen to them. On television you can suppress the sound as surely as you can suppress synthetic colour if that is how you prefer to experience the film.

The same holds true of Giorgio Moroder's modernisation of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. He has added sound effects and a contemporary score with a view to making the film more palatable to modern audiences. Oddly enough, hearing Freddie Mercury sing 'Love Kills' and Bonnie Tyler put over 'Here She Comes' serves not to make Lang's futuristic fantasy seem relevant to today but to emphasise how old-fashioned it looks. Moroder's version is now the only way you can see *Metropolis* on video; but again, if it offends you, you can run it through your television silent.

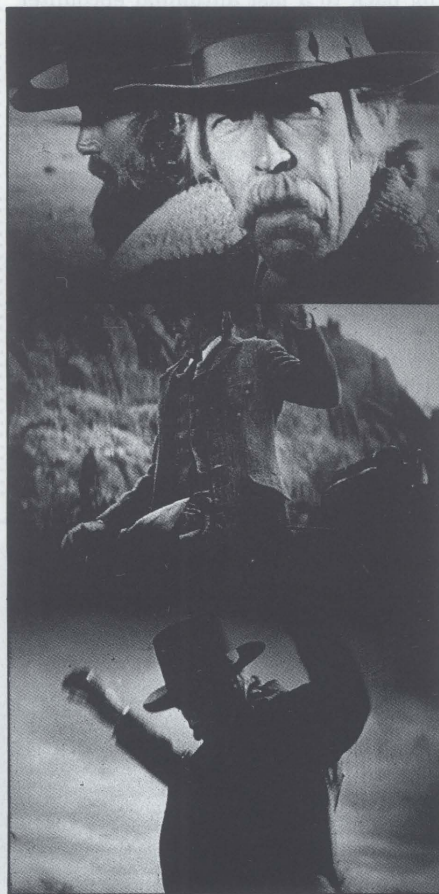
In the treatment of musical scores for silent films, none has been more enterprising than the video company Hendring. When Edmund Meisel's legendary score for *The Battleship Potemkin* was exhumed recently and played as a live accompaniment for the first time since the 1920s, its dynamism was rightly much admired. This, after all, was the score that in some countries had been banned as being even more inflammatory than the film.

Yet some of us, even as we applauded, felt a twinge of regret for the highly emotional score by N. Kryukov that Mosfilm had appended to the film and with which we had all grown up. Should we never hear it again simply because Meisel's had at last turned up and confirmed its reputation? The answer is no. Thanks to Hendring, you can now choose which score you want to hear. Its *Battleship Potemkin* videotape has the two versions of Eisenstein's movie—one with Meisel's score, the other with Kryukov's—joined end to end. This practice deserves encouragement. *The Leopard*, *A Star Is Born* and *Lost Horizon* could all benefit from similar treatment—perhaps as a double pack if no satisfactory way can be found of accommodating more than four hours on a commercial tape.

Meisel's other famous score—the one for Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*—no longer exists in its full form orchestrated for a 75-piece band. But the piano score survives, and in 1985 this was worked up into an arrangement for two pianos and percussion by Lothar Prox, Günther Becker and Emil Gerhardt. As performed at the 1985 London Film Festival, it rejuvenated an old warhorse whose visual power to surprise had long since staled with repetition.

Berlin, of course, has always been with us in the form Ruttmann intended. That is far from the case, however, with the most famous of all modern restoration dramas—the *Lawrence of Arabia* remould carried out by archivist Robert A. Harris over three years, which is a model of its kind. First shown in December, 1962 at 222 minutes, *Lawrence* was cut by 20 minutes within the first

two months and then by a further 15 minutes late in 1970. No print of the 222-minute version survived and Harris had to go through the same patient detective work as Robert Gitt on *Becky Sharp* to put together a composite print. There was no record of what the 222-minute version contained, but Anne V. Coates, the film's editor, knew how it had been assembled and helped Harris to reconstruct it from many different prints and sources. For eight minutes of the film that had no soundtrack, the actors rerecorded their dialogue. This was then mechanically altered to compensate for the way the timbre of the actors' voices had changed in the intervening years.



Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid: footage restored to the film, of Pat Garrett's murder in an ambush.

By now it's all a well-told tale, but it does have a happy ending. At the last, David Lean got the chance to do his own fine tuning, snipping and rearranging here and there to arrive at a definitive 'director's cut'. In 1989, *Lawrence of Arabia* was finally the film David Lean wanted it to be.

By dint of its scale, this film has attracted most of the recent publicity in the field of restoration, but it is by no means the only virtuous example. Sixteen years after an uncomprehending MGM cut and dumped it on the market, Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* has lately resurfaced, courtesy of the editor Roger Spottiswoode, in a version 16 minutes longer than the 1973 release print. It is a true 'director's version' because Peckinpah hid this

copy away after a sneak preview and before the studio could take the scissors to it.

There are small differences—changes of emphasis, additional lines of dialogue—throughout the film, but the most important new material is near the beginning. The film now opens (and alternates between colour and black and white) in 1909 with the killing of Garrett as an old man in an ambush—a scene that is also reprised at the end. It is only then that the action flashes back to 1881, to Billy and his gang at target practice in Fort Sumner; to Garrett—now a poacher turned gamekeeper—setting out the ground rules for what will be a long pursuit, ultimately circling back to a last autumnal encounter in the same location.

The effect is very much to throw the emphasis on Garrett. The story becomes less the crucifixion of a God figure (though that element is still there) than the tragedy of a man who outlived his time and couldn't in the end, by killing Billy the Kid, shuffle off the old Adam in himself. In living and killing by the gun, Garrett writes his own destiny and ensures that he, too, will ultimately die by the gun. The framing device of the murder of Garrett puts an entirely different perspective on the final confrontation with Billy. Even more than in the studio release version, it can be read as a man's unsuccessful attempt to exorcise his own ghosts.

None of the other differences and

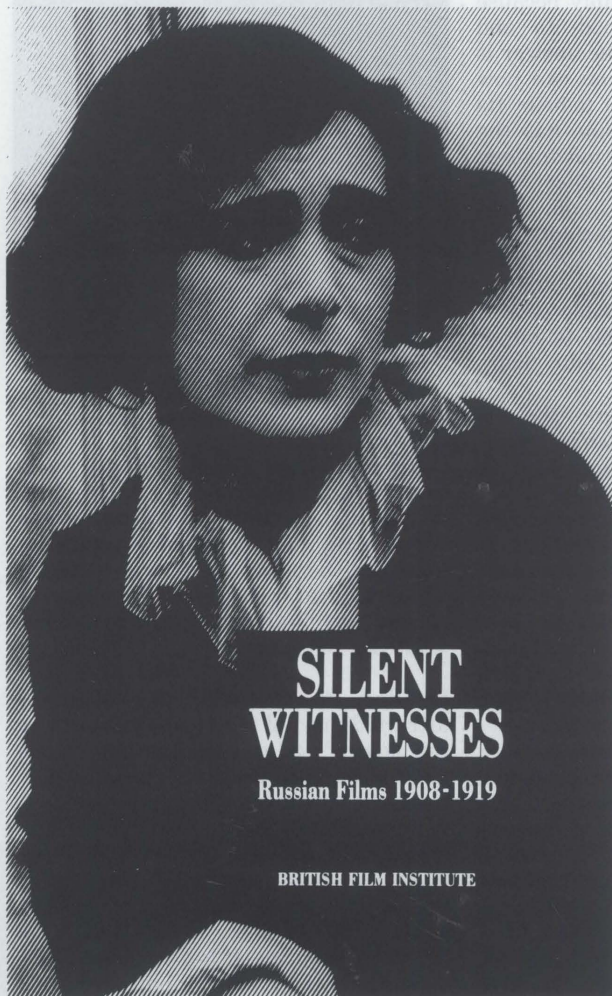
discrepancies between the two versions has so important an effect on how we read the film as a whole. But there are minor divergences. Garrett no longer, for example, beats up a whore to get information about Billy and the scene of Slim Pickens' death is allowed to generate its own elegiac quality, without the overlay of Bob Dylan's song 'Knock, Knock, Knockin' on Heaven's Door'. In the release version, this was one of the over-emphatic moments in which Peckinpah's haunting, nostalgic visuals were undercut by what seemed uncharacteristically crude underlining.

There are still some question marks. Peckinpah apparently shot a scene between Garrett and his Mexican wife in which she remonstrates with him for leaving her. Stills exist of this scene and the actress playing Mrs Garrett receives a cast credit, but the scene itself is missing. There is merely a cryptic reference to Mrs Garrett while Pat is being shaved in the barber's saloon and a truncated shot in which he goes to pay her a visit. Whatever became of the scene? American observers like Paul Seydor, who has documented the saga in his book *Peckinpah: The Western Films*, say that the scene was intact when the film was shown on television, though other episodes evidently were not. Whether or not this scene can be retrieved (and it sounds an important one, with Mrs Garrett accusing her husband of being 'dead inside'), *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* already

stands revealed as a finer movie than we ever knew.

In Britain, the most valuable restoration work is being done by the National Film Archive, particularly with regard to the films of Michael Powell. Of the Powell pictures that have been made as good as new, the most striking are *The Tales of Hoffmann* and *Gone To Earth*, neither of which had been widely seen here in full. *Hoffmann*, for example, had been released in 1951 minus the entire third act (the Antonia episode). Working from the three-strip Technicolor negative made available by Weintraub Entertainment, the NFA's colour consultant, Paul de Burgh, was able to reconstruct an integral print running 15 minutes longer than any that had been seen for years.

Gone To Earth had suffered similar indignities. Disliked and misunderstood by David O. Selznick, who had planned it as a vehicle for Jennifer Jones, it was turned over to Rouben Mamoulian to produce a re-edited version 3 minutes shorter and with additional scenes to clarify the story. This version, retitled *The Wild Heart*, was the only form in which the film had been generally known for thirty years. For the London Film Festival in 1985, however, the Archive produced a new print of the film which Michael Powell declared to be closer to his initial intention, in terms of colour printing, than he had been able to obtain in 1950. There's hyper-restoration for you. ■



SILENT WITNESSES

Russian Films 1908-1919

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

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SILENT WITNESSES

RUSSIAN FILMS 1908 - 1919

EDITED BY YURI TSIVIAN

The Pordenone Festival in October 1989 revealed for the first time the extraordinary riches of the pre-Soviet Russian cinema. *SILENT WITNESSES* is the first book to provide full information on these recently recovered fiction films produced during one of the least explored periods in the history of the cinema.

Outstanding among these films are the early animated work of Wladyslaw Starewicz and the sombre melodramas of Evgenii Bauer. But there was also a rich tradition of comedy and of historical spectacle, and the films are enriched by wonderful performances across the board by actors and actresses such as Ivan Mosjoukine, Vera Kholodnaya and Vera Karalli.

Prepared as a catalogue for the Pordenone Festival and based on the research of Soviet scholar Yuri Tsivian, the volume includes filmographic data, contemporary reviews, memoirs of the films' producers, directors and actors, together with an ample bibliography and a vast array of previously unpublished framestills, production stills, portraits, and posters.

SILENT WITNESSES is co-published with Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine, Pordenone, Italy, with a bilingual text in English and Italian.

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J. J. Hunsecker on 'No, But I Saw the Movie', Hollywood's Mexico and the continuing mystery of 'Hi, Judy'

SMALL STORIES

What does this remind you of? 'The long red and silver fatly curved Streamliner streaks past Honda, heading west, three mornings a week. Eastbound, it rattles by in the night, a sound, sudden and fleeting. But on the mornings when it is seen, its length alive with glints from the ever-present sunlight, the Streamliner is an event to Honda, a glimpse of the sleekness and wealth, the silver-chromium speed, that belong to other places. That is why the morning the Streamliner stopped it was more than an event; it was a shock. It was wrong, not normal. The whole town felt it; the range, when it heard, felt it. And even then, that morning, the feeling was that this happening would mean a bad time for Honda.'

It is the opening of John Sturges' classic thriller *Bad Day at Black Rock*, or rather the original version that appears as the beginning of Howard Breslin's short story *Bad Time at Honda*. There are many such shocks of recognition in David Wheeler's fascinating anthology of stories, *No, But I Saw the Movie* (Penguin, £5.99). James Stewart standing on a bridge intending suicide, Anne Baxter loitering at the stagedoor waiting for Bette Davis, Gary Cooper walking down a dusty street to meet the murderer who has come back to kill him—versions of all these cinematic moments can be read in stories by now unknown writers, and it was an inspired idea to assemble some of them into an anthology.

With stunning inaccuracy, the book is subtitled, 'The best short stories ever made into films'. That suggests an anthology of Chekhov, Hemingway, Kipling and Joyce, which would be of higher literary quality but far less interesting as a film book. The faithful adaptation of great literary works into prestigious films like *The Man Who Would Be King* or *The Dead* is another subject altogether—and a much less interesting one. Most of the stories in this book are third-rate pieces of writing which were saved by having the idea around which a film could be constructed, however inadequately it was expressed. *Bad Time at Honda*, for example, reads like a précis of the film from which everything memorable has been stripped away, and it's not just a matter of Sturges' CinemaScope and his remarkably strong cast. The story also lacks Millard Kaufman's crackling dialogue ('Are you saying I'm wrong?' 'You're not just wrong, you're wrong at the top of your voice') and the crescendo of menace (rendered more frightening in the film by making Spencer Tracy's

hero one-armed) which finally explodes into violence.

The wretchedly sentimental *The Greatest Gift* consists only of the last twenty minutes or so of its film version, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and features nothing of the New Deal politics that is so important to it. It is a sub-Dickensian piece of Christmas whimsy with one irresistible idea—the device of allowing a suicidal man to see his home town as it would have been if he had never lived. On the other hand, the story of *It Happened One Night* is more overtly political than the film.

Robert Frost once said that poetry is what gets lost in translation. Many things get lost in the translation of a story to the screen. One of the most bizarre is the actual meaning of the title. Viewers of Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* may wonder why the film is so called, since there is no explanation given within the film itself. However, readers of this anthology will discover the answer in the very first words of Daphne Du Maurier's story: 'Don't look now,' John said to his wife, 'but there are a couple of old girls two tables away who are trying to hypnotise me.'

This line was probably cut from the movie adaptation because the English expression was unsuitable in the mouth of the Canadian Donald Sutherland. No one noticed, or cared, that this omission rendered the title meaningless. The titles of both *A Clockwork Orange* and *Straw Dogs* are incomprehensible without a knowledge of the original books. The most recent example is the film version of Martin Amis' novel *The*

Rachel Papers. Several critics noted that since the hero of Damian Harris' updated version made his lascivious comments on his quarry on a computer file and not in a notebook, there were no Rachel papers.

David Wheeler's anthology has its puzzling pages as well. Robert Bloch's chilling story *The Real Bad Friend* is featured as the 'original basis' for Hitchcock's *Psycho*. In fact, the story—in which a man arranges to have his wife killed by a friend—is far more like *Strangers on a Train* than *Psycho*. Its only connection with the latter film lies in making use of the device of having what are apparently two characters turn out to be just one, but then that is an old literary idea.

There may be a connection, though only a tenuous one, since Joseph Stefano's screenplay was based on a Robert Bloch novel, actually called *Psycho*. And, in the words of Hitchcock's biographer Donald Spoto, 'Hitchcock insisted on fidelity to the basic story—although he took Stefano's advice and made the leading characters more sympathetic. *Psycho* remained, in outline, true to the novel.' Fortunately, those who adapted the stories in this volume felt no such compulsion.

SOUTH OF...

A perennial problem for any film critic is that troublesome first paragraph. Rather than immediately mentioning a film of the week, it's always tempting to begin with some general ruminations on the cinematic form, with a sort of clearing of the throat. Adam Mars-Jones of the *Independent* began his review of *Old Gringo* in just such a way: 'For North American cinema, Mexico has not usually been the subject of films so much as a cheap place to make them,

Spencer Tracy on location for *Bad Day at Black Rock*.





Made in Zimbabwe. Zakes Mokae, Donald Sutherland in *A Dry White Season*.

a permanent geographical stand-in for other dry and dusty places, with the additional advantage, for a film-maker like Sam Peckinpah, that animals did not have to be treated humanely there.'

This sounds perceptive enough, and yet would it not make equally good, or perhaps even better, sense to argue the opposite? 'For North American cinema, Mexico has functioned not so much as a geographical stand-in, but rather as itself a subject.' It is particularly odd of Mars-Jones to cite Peckinpah, whose films such as *The Wild Bunch*, *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* and even *Convoy* provide a searching exploration of Mexico as a lawless refuge, an escape and a state of mind lurking in the shadows of the American consciousness. One could construct a suggestive theory of the Western simply by exploring the move from innocence to experience represented by the shift in subject matter from the frontier in the west to that other frontier down south, from *My Darling Clementine* to *Rio Grande*, *Red River* to *Vera Cruz*. A pivotal example might be the failure of John Wayne's *The Alamo*, which tries and fails to relocate the spiritual frontier of the pioneers on the Mexican border.

Interestingly, it took an Italian Marxist, Sergio Leone, after he had made a whole series of Westerns set in Mexico (though with Spain standing in for it), to put the subject of the expansion of the frontier back at the centre of the genre in *Once Upon a Time in the West*, but in terms radically different from anything dreamt of in John Wayne's universe.

Nevertheless, Adam Mars-Jones has touched on a subject that is of some topical interest. Robert Mugabe, the

president of Zimbabwe, was recently prominent at the Commonwealth Conference in Malaysia, calling for increased sanctions against South Africa.

However, as far as his film industry, at least, is concerned, Mugabe has a vested interest in maintaining South African repression. One result of an increase in creative freedom for film-makers in South Africa would be that Zimbabwe would lose its lucrative status as an imitation South Africa for anti-apartheid films. It is a paradox of our time that many filmgoers have gained much of their knowledge of South Africa through the views of a lightly disguised Harare in such films as *A World Apart*, *A Dry White Season* and *Cry Freedom*. (A small number of action films have been shot in South Africa, some with the active cooperation of the South African army, but one will search in vain in the credits of these movies for due acknowledgment.)

The film industries of Thailand and the Philippines will be looking with similarly mixed feelings at developments in Cambodia and Vietnam. Since they possess jungles and oriental populations that look about right, they have between them provided the locations for virtually every Vietnam War movie. But now documentary makers are already being allowed a virtual free hand in Vietnam and it probably won't be very long before we see John Rambo walking along the real Ho Chi Minh trail.

Elsewhere, glasnost has started to bite in unexpected places. During the Cold War when film-makers had to find stand-ins for Russia that looked cold and grim, they generally chose Dundee or Helsinki—a mixed compliment but a welcome source of dollars. This mini-

industry must have collapsed almost overnight when it was learned that the early scenes of Walter Hill's *Red Heat* were being shot in Red Square. And now the screen adaptation of John Le Carré's *The Russia House* is actually being shot in a Russia that is frantic to attract foreign money.

SCHWARTZ & MATASSCHANSKAYASKY

The *Sunday Telegraph's* media magazine, *7 Days*, contains an interesting feature inside its back cover in which a celebrity chooses his or her favourite films. Hunsecker was glad to see that Ian Dury chose *Sweet Smell of Success* as one of his half-dozen greatest, but rather dismayed by the anecdote with which Dury accompanied his choice: '[Walter] Matthau told me how he was at New York drama school with Tony Curtis in the days when Curtis had a totally unpronounceable name. One day he said earnestly to him in his broad Brooklyn accent, "Hey, Walter, what's with this 'Now is the winter of our discontent?'" and Matthau knew then and there he'd be a big Hollywood star.'

Surely Bernard Schwartz (Curtis' real name) isn't all that difficult to pronounce? And the anecdote seemed particularly inappropriate when the source of it was an actor whose original name is Walter Matasschanskayasky. (Matthau actually acted under that name when he took a small role as a drunk in *Earthquake*.)

The reader may have been tempted at first to blame this error on a misunderstanding on the part of Caroline Boucher, the journalist interviewing Dury. But it became clear that Dury's grasp on his favourite films wasn't entirely secure. Take his favourite film of all: 'I do like films with strong hero figures—like the corrupted folk hero in *Salvatore Giuliano*, a sort of wicked Sicilian Robin Hood. It's the greatest film I've ever seen: a mixture of rural life with a totally modern awareness and brilliantly direct.'

Francesco Rosi's film is indeed a masterpiece, but citing its strong hero figure is like praising *Persona* for its crowd scenes. The film is a Marxist study of social banditry whose whole point is that the hero is virtually never seen throughout the film. Dury will perhaps next be urging us to see the *Sons of Katie Elder* for its portrait of a strong mother, or *Rebecca* for its study of an evil wife.

The point of this is not to snipe at Ian Dury—fun as that is. More striking is the ignorance it reveals in a magazine whose subject is film and television. You would be unlikely to find errors of this kind in an American magazine, not just because of their notorious editorial pedantry but also because that is a cinematically literate culture.

DOUBLE TAKES

OFF HER TROLLEY

It is good to know that the first Hunsecker column has been stimulating controversy concerning the most serious issues of film scholarship. The debate is over the existence or not of an aural mistake during the 'Trolley Song' sequence in Vincente Minnelli's *Meet Me in St Louis*. It had been claimed that the words 'Hi, Judy' are audible during the song, addressed from off-screen to Judy Garland by someone who walked on set while the sequence was being shot, and the truth of this was doubted in this column, largely because it seemed technically impossible. Now Ken Hoare writes insisting that this was wrong (see Letters).

The sequence was re-inspected by the Hunsecker technical team and Ken Hoare is undoubtedly correct—at least about what you hear. For interested readers who have access to a video of the film, the interpolation in question occurs during the following part of the song:

HE TIPPED HIS HAT AND TOOK A SEAT,
HE SAID HE HOPED HE HADN'T STEPPED
UPON MY FEET.

HE ASKED MY NAME, I HELD MY BREATH,
I COULDN'T SPEAK BECAUSE HE SCARED ME
HALF TO DEA-A-[HI, JUDY!]-TH.

The exclamation is both very clear

and unambiguous. Judy Garland's supposed reaction seems more dubious, to this writer at least, since she is constantly looking around while singing.

It's hard to think of an explanation for this bizarre greeting. Most likely, perhaps, is a joke played by a sound technician involved in the dubbing process that somehow slipped through into the final print. It may even be a joke between Garland and Minnelli, who were of course married at the time.

Visual mistakes are relatively common in movies but errors involving the soundtrack seem to be far rarer, probably because they can be so easily altered even at a very late stage of post-production. (Though there are a good many among the cheaper B-Westerns, where they wouldn't retake a scene unless a performer dried completely.)

There is one little-known example in a film that is an almost unique mixture of slovenliness and precision, Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*. Several examples of visual errors in the film have been noted elsewhere but not the slip of the tongue that occurs in the scene when Cary Grant (b. 1904) and his 'mother' Jessie Royce Landis (b. 1904) search the hotel room of the elusive George Kaplan. One of Grant's first actions is to pick up a photograph from the dressing table, which shows James

Mason in a crowd of distinguished-looking men:

GRANT: Look who's here.

LANDIS: Who? Where?

GRANT: Our friend who's *assembling* the General Assembly this afternoon. (My italics.)

Perhaps readers can supply some more examples. The more famous the film the better.

J. J. HUNSECKER

North by Northwest
son (b. 1904) and mother (b. 1904).



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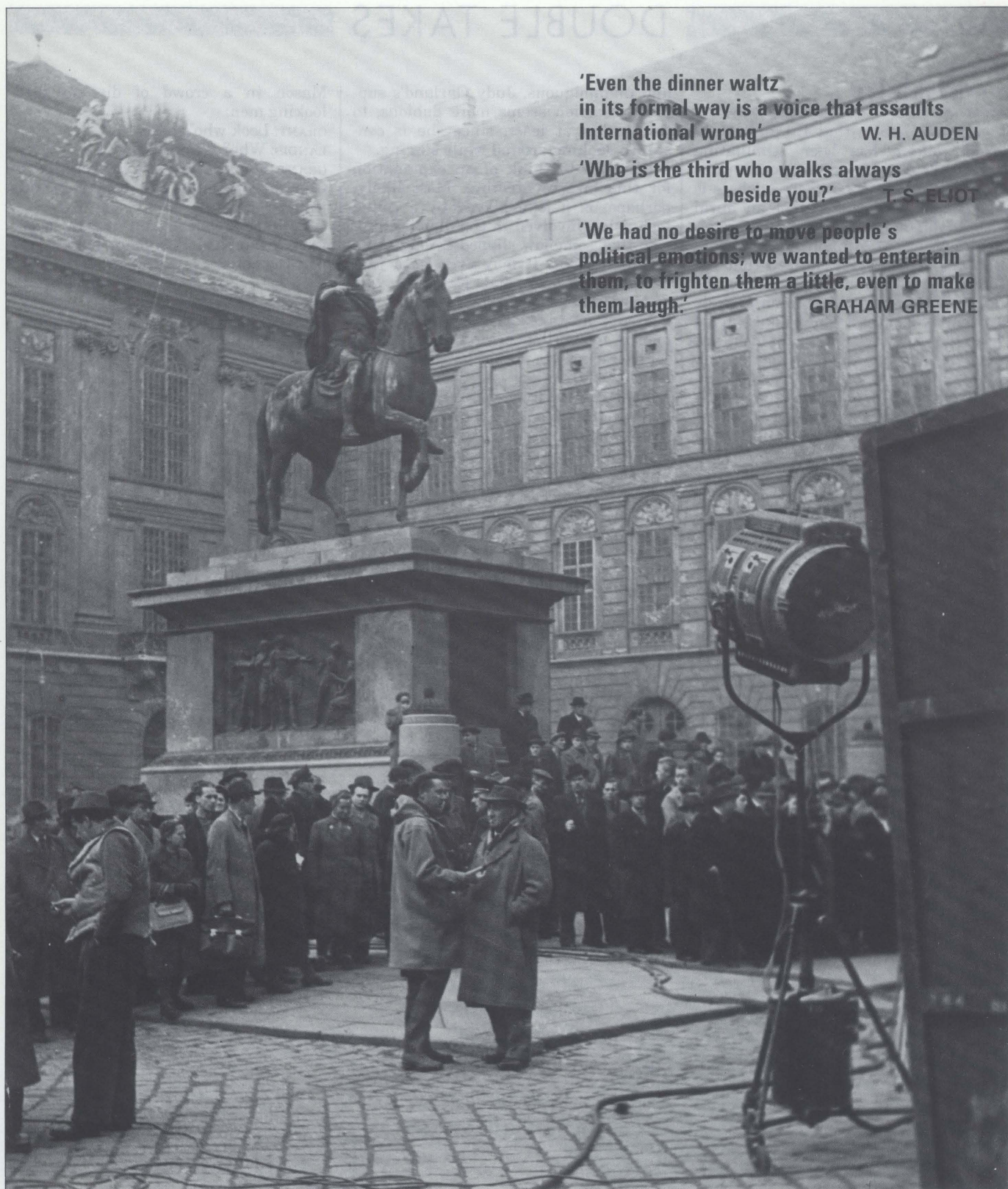
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'Even the dinner waltz
in its formal way is a voice that assaults
International wrong' W. H. AUDEN

'Who is the third who walks always
beside you?' T. S. ELIOT

'We had no desire to move people's
political emotions; we wanted to entertain
them, to frighten them a little, even to make
them laugh.' GRAHAM GREENE

— *Paul Driver* —

A THIRD MAN CENTO

REFLECTIONS ON A MOVIE: I have been obsessed with *The Third Man* for half my life. Why? There are so many answers, and each a triumph for the director Carol Reed, whose masterpiece it is. 'Unique in its brilliance of dialogue, direction and acting,' Andrew Sinclair writes in the introduction to the published script; but the film is more. It is a rare example of popular art achieving transcendence; a thriller embracing the most serious themes; a powerful statement about the nature of love and evil, about the depravity and shattered beauty of our century.

Cinema is the medium special to the twentieth century and creates a special poignancy when used to elucidate that century. Reed arrives at full mastery of the medium in this film—its predecessor, *Odd Man Out*, for all its accomplishment, seems like a mere preparation for *The Third Man*, in which well-madness is raised to the level of genius—and the poignancy of the results is unsurpassed.

When we look for a myth of the times, we might consider whether *The Third Man* doesn't offer more than acceptably lofty works like *The Waste Land* or *Doctor Faustus* or *The Magic Mountain*. It has reached many more people, and having reached them, held them in its irresistible narrative spell. You cannot choose but watch it through, even on the dozenth viewing. Reed has paced the film with a virtually musical sense of temporal structure—and, of course, he has musically hypnotised us beyond this by the use of Anton Karas' zither score.

THE FIRST SHOT, containing the credits (London Films: British imprimatur), is indeed the vibrating strings of a zither in huge close-up. The jaunty, wistful 'Harry Lime' theme quietly sounds. Serendipity of Reed finding Anton Karas (in a Viennese night-club while the film was shooting). It's an absolutely unified soundtrack, almost continuously present, and recalling the improvised piano accompaniment to a silent film, but infinitely more subtle. Cf. other great usages of music in cinema: Ligeti and the *Blue Danube* in Kubrick's *2001*, Mahler's Adagietto in Visconti's *Death in Venice*, the Irish harp theme in Huston's *The Dead*.

The famous 'Lime' theme (equivalent to the little tune which, according to Graham Greene's novella, Harry was always whistling) is used sparingly and fully focused only at crucial dramatic moments (e.g. *pianissimo* after Harry's first recognisable appearance—on the doorstep in a sudden shaft of window-light; more faintly still, and very briefly, at Harry's death). The score is a rich, extended set of variations on the theme. The zither can sound like multiple zithers. Often it seems to drench the film in human tears.

THE FILM is a clever adaptation of Greene's novella or 'treatment'. Between Greene's script, based on the novella, and Reed's completed film are many discrepancies—changes made

during the shooting in the interests of spontaneity and naturalism and which lend the film a certain formal plasticity. Greene wrote the novella in the first place because 'I must have the sense of more material than I need to draw on' (*Ways of Escape*, 1980). But the film is 'better than the story because it is in this case the finished state of the story.'

THE FIRST WORDS we hear are spoken by a narrator (the voice of Carol Reed): 'I never knew the old Vienna before the war, with its Strauss music, its glamour and easy charm—Constantinople suited me better.' But the narrative frame is immediately abandoned. (In the novella there is a first-person narrator—Colonel Calloway—whose presence one tends to forget.) The preface was only added to meet producer David O. Selznick's demand for more background, but is an exigency turned to advantage: the movie is thus instantly touched by the magic of travel, romance, story-telling.

The narrator's brisk, cosmopolitan tone sounds the keynote of what follows and enhances its documentary flavour. Vienna, we are told, 'doesn't look any worse than a lot of other European cities, bombed about a bit... Oh wait, I was going to tell you... about Holly Martins from America—he came all the way here to visit a friend of his. The name was Lime, Harry Lime.'

THE STREET: Holly immediately walks under a ladder! The innocent abroad; what will be the consequences? Choric street-figures, the poor and the startled by life. *The Third Man* was one of the first British films, according to Carol Reed, in which location shots were the norm. (Basil Dearden's influential *The Blue Lamp*, for instance, largely shot on the streets of south London, followed the next year, 1950.)

STIFTGASSE STAIRCASE: Angled shot of staircase—one of the screen's famous staircases (cf. that in *The Magnificent Ambersons*). The Porter—a superb portrayal by Paul Hoerbiger—has convincingly bad English; he looks completely authentic, as though this really were a documentary. He mentions the frost.

CENTRAL CEMETERY: Is it a frosty February? Leaves are falling (stage-leaves). Unforgettable atmosphere: sense simultaneously of withdrawal from life and a magically auspicious moment within it. A dead man is being buried, but life is (hugely) happening.

SACHER'S: Trevor Howard's aquiline features, firmly set as stone, yet benign; clipped British voice; ideally captures Graham Greene's typical policeman, stoic, sympathetic, tough. The character of Paine perfectly caught by Bernard Lee. He knocks Martins down and says, 'Please be careful, sir. Written anything lately?' Crabbit (the conflation of two characters in the novella and original script) delightfully sketched by Wilfrid Hyde-White—he's always accompanied by a 'sophisticated' lady, a flamingo (she is uncredited). 'British' ethos. Crabbit to Martins on learning of the death of his friend Lime: 'Goodness, that's

awkward.' Later, Paine: 'Sounds anti-British, sir.' British ethos has to withstand 'international wrong', evil, ruin—the pathos of this. Phone call to Martins from Kurtz: suspense created by angled close-up of Martins' ear. Throughout, sharply angled shots generate unease, universal suspicion...

MOZART CAFE: Baron Kurtz (Ernst Deutsch), a decadent-looking Viennese straight out of the paintings of Klimt and Schiele. Decadence made physiognomic. A homosexual. The background is an actual café—reality is poignantly preserved. Kurtz's pronunciation of the *v* in *advice*—'I can't help you—except with advice, of course, advice.' Is Kurtz really a baron or a fake?

JOSEFSTADT THEATRE: Anna (Alida Valli, who has a Garbo-like beauty and fascination) is laughing on stage in a blonde wig; but she is dark, and 'there isn't enough for two laughs'. Backstage with Holly: the unsparing realism of, 'You understand German?'/ 'No—no—I... excuse me, I could follow it fine.' She makes tea: badly.

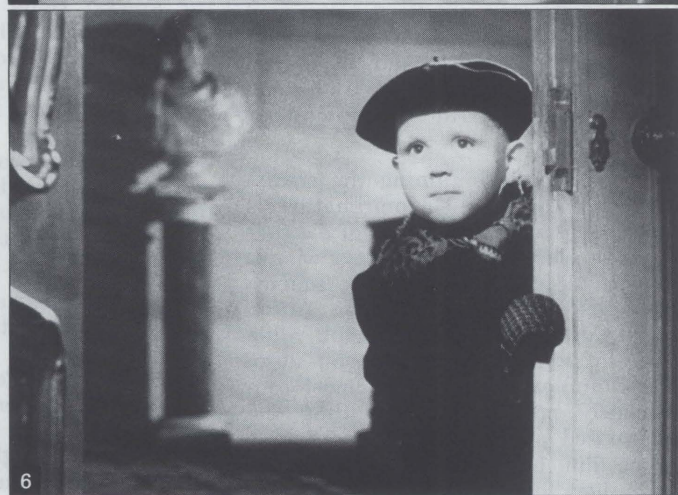
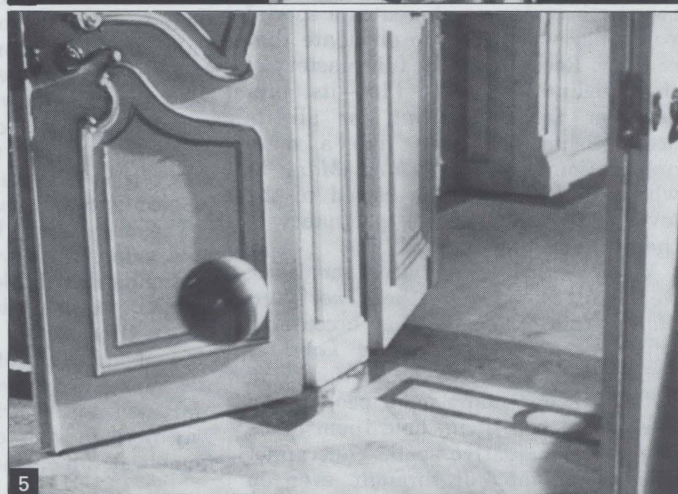
HARRY'S FLAT: Anna combs her hair with Harry's comb taken from a drawer. The Porter says, 'there was a third man. He didn't give evidence'; he 'was just—ordinary. He might have been anybody.' Then an anonymous telephone call received by Anna. The child Hansl creeps round the door. He is ominously round-faced: an avatar of Harry?

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED on the street outside Harry's apartment, when Harbin was evidently murdered and Harry Lime himself, supposedly killed, was a third man carrying the dead body, is difficult or impossible to reconstruct: we are given insufficient information. But it doesn't matter: plots in the best thrillers—*The Big Sleep*, *The Long Goodbye*, *Chinatown*—are numinous in themselves. *The Third Man* certainly touches on *film noir*.

ANNA'S BEDROOM: Police raid. The landlady (Hedwig Bleibtreu) a memorable old crone wrapped in a vast quilt. Enormous rooms. High ceilings. Grandeur of Imperial Vienna. The police take Anna's love-letters from Harry: 'There are not many of them.'

DR WINKEL'S FLAT: Kurtz is visiting; they are lovers (N.B. the arm-on-shoulder gesture at the end of the scene before the Great Wheel scene). Kurtz's repulsive little dog is shooed out of the room. Winkel's collection of fake religious *objets d'art*. Winkel (Erich Ponto), wiping his mouth (having been interrupted at dinner): 'I cannot give an opinion. I was not there.' Winkel's raised eyebrow (Martins: 'Could it have been...')/ Winkel: 'Yes?') is classic.

CASANOVA CLUB: Shots of Kurtz playing his violin to an ugly woman devouring soup. Popescu (Siegfried Breuer): oleaginous, fat-faced, charmingly smiling, ruthless. 'Humanity's a duty. Cigarette, Miss Schmidt? Keep ze pack.' Like Harry, he suffers from a digestive complaint: they both need medications



Harry's flat. The Porter, 'There was a third man'; the anonymous phone call; the child Hansl, heralded by his ball.

(which can only be obtained from America), just as they both deprive others of them. (Anomaly of continuity: how can Martins at this stage in the film ask Popescu if he knows 'a man called Harbin?') Popescu's concluding remark, 'Everyone ought to be careful in a city like this,' followed by loud stabbing zither music which does mean drama, not melodrama. Popescu arranges a meeting on the Reichsbrücke (to plot the removal of the Porter) and, if we look hard, we catch our first sight of Lime—big, burly, great-coated, his back turned to the camera.

ANNA'S ROOM: From Harry's violence (the murder of the Porter) to the pathos of Harry's girl and his zither melody (a small hint of it) in one leap. First of two intensely moving encounters between Holly and Anna in her room. Mystique

of Harry, as schoolboy, as Anna's lover. Anna: 'He never grew up. The world grew up round him, that's all—and buried him.' A double catastrophe. Awfulness of 'You know, you ought to find yourself a girl.'

ANNA cannot *not* love Harry. Holly loves Anna; she cannot love him. The film is about loving in the face, loving the face, of evil, and evil's ultimate redemption by a look of . . . love (Harry's look when, in the sewers, he gives his agonised but suddenly beautiful consent to his shooting by Holly). It's about how we cannot will ourselves to love. Anna will never love Holly, for all his apparent eligibility. She cannot even get his name right. All the weight of Hollywood's romantic conventions is behind such a coming-together: this is Selznick. But the individual direction resists that, subverts

the genre, and makes a true statement about love: this is Reed.

HARRY'S STREET: Little Hansl arousing the crowd with his shrieks of 'Papa'. A horrific dwarf, yet an oddly lifelike portrayal of a shrieking child. (Cf. the child-dwarf-hag figure in the denouement of Roeg's *Don't Look Now*.)

CULTURAL CENTRE: Comedy of the 'lecture', the questioner who asks 'Where would you put James Joyce?', etc. Another spiral staircase. The chase up it marks the first big build-up of tension. Curious deserted room containing the parrot; the latter one of several conspicuous 'stage props' in the film, together with the ball, balloons, bunches of flowers, dog, cat, teddy bear and the numerous staircases. Holly escapes into darkened, lyrically crumbling

Vienna. Steps—steps are everywhere. The cathedral.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS: Comic leavening of the painful magic lantern show—Paine first shows the wrong slides, 'the new lot that's just come in for Mr Crabbit' (a remark not interpolated into the published script). Holly learns the truth about Harry's penicillin racket.

CABARET BAR: Girls with pointy breasts. Old flower-seller who persuades Holly to buy 'two huge bunches of chrysanthemums'.

ANNA'S ROOM: Suitcases piled by the door. Anna is sleeping with the big windows wide open, though it is supposedly frosty. The second exchange between Holly and Anna: archetypal intensity—two people in a love-game, a sad one, an unequal one, full of tears. (Anna: 'For heaven's sake, stop making him in your image. Harry was real.') The music here more than usually intense, pulsing, speaking. Holly (who is drunk) casually switches the light at

less, luminous effectiveness of the 'props', the simple objects periodically held up to us, the ball, balloons, etc. In *The Third Man* the real always becomes the poetic, the contrived becomes the irresistibly expressive. We haven't till now been shown a Viennese kiosk, but accept this one as part of the scene even as we immediately realise that it is part of the plot. Calloway and Paine sceptically arrive. Trevor Howard's characteristic delivery of 'It wasn't the German gin.'

THE GREAT WHEEL: Tune starts. Having been introduced well past the film's mid-point, the character Lime is established by this great scene. His approach from the distance of the Prater (Holly has almost given up waiting for him) is brisk and unforgettable; the film again touches the archetypal—this is the timelessly true depiction of a friend arriving to meet a friend. How convincingly Orson Welles conveys the sense of life quickening for Holly whenever

part Greene, part improvisation—are also memorable: 'Give myself up? This is a far far better thing. The old lime-light and the fall of the curtain. We aren't heroes, Holly, you and I. The world doesn't make heroes outside of your stories.' '... We shall be old for a very long time.' (These cadences faintly Beckettian.)

Joseph Cotten says his line 'I should be pretty easy to get rid of' with a sort of coyness. Harry's 'odd touch of genuine pity' in 'The dead are happier dead. They don't miss much here, poor devils,' spoken as he fingermarks 'Anna' on the car window (what exactly has he done and not done to and for Anna?) contrasted with his actual, *almost* understandable conviction that it is possible to 'calculate how many dots [people on the ground] you could afford to spare.'

Harry is like Everyman in that he closes his eyes to the consequences of his actions, or rather, given the nature of his actions, a parody of Everyman.



The kitten runs out of the flat and finds Harry Lime in the doorway.

the window on and off, but it seems like a signal—Harry is lurking below and must see it. The cat runs out, finds Harry. Memorable tracking shot from the window down to the street.

ANNA'S STREET: Harry's first proper appearance, 'stage-managed' with deliberate obviousness, though filmed with genius (Robert Krasker's photography won him an Oscar). The stage-management relies on Holly's tipsiness, which also gives the scene a vibrancy. The sight of Lime jolts Holly out of his flushed state, of course. Reed wonderfully catches the flavour of the actual: streets at night. Lime's shoes—hard, black, shiny—on the doorstep; the cat unconvincingly nuzzles them. Lime's quizzical first look: one of the greatest moments in cinema (the greatest being his last look). The surprise for the viewer is absolute and fully emotional. The definitive version of the tune starts softly up. (But there's a reel break just here which can be fatal!)

KIOSK SQUARE: Resplendent presence of the (ornamental) kiosk: it's just obdurately there, yet in its metal heavy way seems almost numinous. The film continually transforms the desolate ruined city into poetry—all the documentary detail is perceived as such but also as transfigured things. Hence the effort-

less, luminous effectiveness of the 'props', the simple objects periodically held up to us, the ball, balloons, etc. In *The Third Man* the real always becomes the poetic, the contrived becomes the irresistibly expressive. We haven't till now been shown a Viennese kiosk, but accept this one as part of the scene even as we immediately realise that it is part of the plot. Calloway and Paine sceptically arrive. Trevor Howard's characteristic delivery of 'It wasn't the German gin.'

The city may be wrecked but the Great Wheel is still functioning. (Next to it, a rather forlorn carousel.) The confrontation of the two friends (which must count among the finest performances of both actors) becomes a kind of epiphany. As the car rises over the Prater, it also rises over Europe in mid-century: we are given a hawk's eye view of the tragic historical scene, and Lime's remarks become a Mephistophelean commentary on the times. It's all done colloquially and within the bounds of popular entertainment, yet we may well be put in mind of parallel epiphanic scenes from 'serious' literature: Ivan's nightmare meeting with the Devil in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the conversation between Leverkühn and the Devil in *Doctor Faustus* (a novel musically preoccupied and contemporary with *The Third Man*). As for *The Magic Mountain*, which is a single, enormously sustained act of looking down on Europe from a great height, the Great Wheel scene compresses it into a gesture.

ORSON WELLES' contribution to the script is well-known: the cuckoo-clock speech with which he concludes (plus many minor alterations). But his other lines—

The attractive and repugnant sides of his character are locked in the fiercest antagonism throughout the film; but his dying moment releases the tension and allows the moral meaning of the film to spread back over it, like a wave.

VIENNA STATION: Atmosphere of steam trains. Romance of stations. (Monet.) In the buffet, Holly tells Anna, 'They want me to help take him.' She, simply: 'Poor Harry.' And he: 'Poor Harry? Poor Harry wouldn't even lift a finger to help you.' Last sentence of the novella: 'Poor all of us, when you come to think of it.' She tears up her ticket and passport, and discards the overcoat Holly had put round her. Shot of the discarded coat. (A curious piece of dubbing: Holly seems for a moment to have the wrong voice.)

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL: Tact of the film in not revealing the meningitis horrors directly. We simply see an unclaimed teddy bear.

THE TRAP: Holly waits in 'Café Marc Aurel'; Calloway and Paine are outside. The exotic balloon-seller (the film again exploiting deliberate 'staginess') seems like a decoy (but Holly is the decoy), or it could be Lime in disguise (*à la* Sherlock Holmes). Actually the figure is a means of providing suspense through comedy. Paine has to buy a balloon, and as the seller goes off there is a sudden

musical change to the full theme: Harry makes his matchless entry, appearing on top of a ruined building, smoking a cigarette, coolly surveying the scene—*una bella figura*. Anna bursts into the café in a wet mackintosh—angry, superb, terrible. Harry enters ‘not through the main door, but by the back way.’ It is his moment of gullibility, a beautiful one—not a particularly plausible one, but entirely convincing in terms of the film’s emotional logic: no element of melodrama is introduced. He escapes already a frightened animal.

RAISING THE CHASE: ‘With shrill whistles and shouts. Dogs bark and sirens hoot.’ The sense of total mobilisation is striking and thrown into dramatic relief partly by the withholding of incidental music in the sewers scene until the moment of Lime’s death, when his theme affords a tiny epitaph. The mobilisation of the police forces both comes as a relief and builds up suspense; it contributes, too, to the documentary portrayal of Vienna and its four-power international zone.

THE SEWERS: The use of the sewers setting is a brilliant coup not only because it assists the fine tuning of the plot, and creates a thrilling visual effect, but because a descent under the city after the ascent in the Great Wheel above it is profoundly satisfying. The claims of aesthetic expression and documentary are simultaneously met. The two locations provide the film with a metaphorical frame: up to a vantage on Europe, down to the hell which the century has just enacted and lived through; up to Harry’s curious pitying heartlessness, down to his judgment

and perdition. And the city is wholly embraced.

THE LAST OF HARRY LIME: The frantic pursuit is interrupted by a sudden stillness: Harry finds himself alone with the echoing shouts, and tries another avenue of escape. Paine’s murder, a further instance of the film’s tact: he falls in slow motion, Calloway shoots Harry, and halts with Martins by Paine’s body, both momentarily forgetting the chase. Obsequies, so to speak, are done, when in another film there would be no pause in the action. The famous fingers on the grille are actually those of Carol Reed. ‘Harry is in great pain and fear.’ The look with which he beckons Holly to finish him is unbearably moving—it is one of complete understanding and has a sort of seraphic beauty. The meaning of the film hinges on that expression. Acting has become completely structural.

MORALLY the film has worked upon us: we cannot help but pity Harry in his distress and are moved by the beauty of his final understanding. We must, and do, love our enemy. Through the characterisation of Harry, evil has been given the benefit of every doubt, and at the last moment is almost redeemed. We fully comprehend Anna’s love for Harry. We feel pity for Holly. If Anna cannot transfer her love to a ‘good’ man (‘a person doesn’t change,’ she has said, ‘because you find out more’), that is the nature of love which we must accept, and now do.

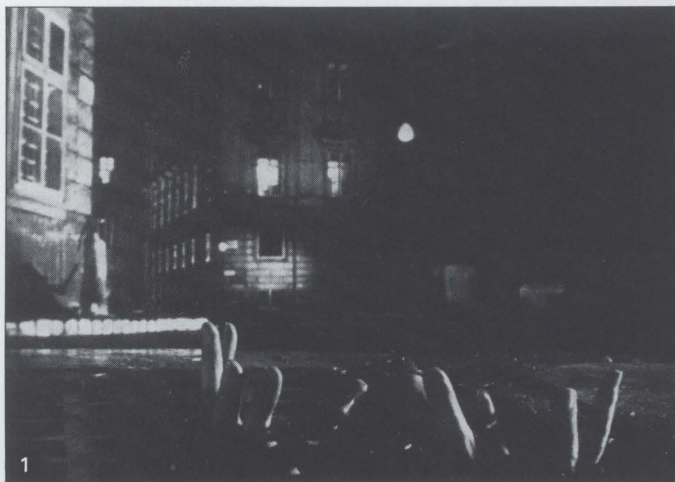
CEMETERY STREET: The leaves are falling. One of the boldest, most mesmerising, most emotional shots (the camera perfectly still) in cinema. Sad strummings on the zither. Anna walks right past Holly, doesn’t look at him, doesn’t even look away from him. Holly *lights a cigarette*.

The last of Harry Lime: the fingers on the grille; Lime’s last look; Martins and Calloway in the echoing sewer.

All frame stills made by Colin Rattee of the National Film Archive at Berkhamsted.



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HISTORICAL AFTERWORD: 'The other day in London a surgeon took two friends to see the film. He was surprised to find them subdued and depressed by a picture he had enjoyed. They then told him that at the end of the war when they were with the Royal Air Force they had themselves sold penicillin in Vienna. The possible consequences of their act had never before occurred to them.'—Graham Greene's preface (1950) to his novella.

MUSICALITY OF THE STRUCTURE: The pacing of the film and the arrangement of scenes are remarkably effective. The narrative unfolds with a quasi-musical rhythm. (The beguiling zither music emblematises the deeper music of the structure itself.) The two funerals stand as prologue and epilogue (the first not of course literally the first thing we see), and there is a third grave-scene near the middle.

Harry is virtually absent from the film until a point at just under two-thirds of its length: after approximately 62 minutes in a film lasting 100 minutes, a point which actually divides the length into a Golden Section. (Cf. the movingly inevitable arrival of the scarcely expected 'Andante cantabile' theme in the 18th of the 24 variations of Rachmaninov's *Paganini Rhapsody*.) Thenceforth—thanks to Orson Welles—Harry dominates so much that the actual ten or so minutes of his total screen time seems much longer, especially in the memory. One may well remember the cloacal pursuit to the exclusion of all else in the movie's second half, yet its duration is a brief 7'40". This is the artistic 'bending' of time, and Reed's skill as a pacer is fully the equal of Hitchcock's.

CRUCIFORM STRUCTURE: Fancifully, one can conceive of the structure of *The Third Man* as formed by crossing axes, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal axis is the rhythmic sequence of events, articulated by the cemetery scenes and Lime's appearances (including his 'pre-appearance' on the bridge), and characterised by the documentary reality of ruined postwar Vienna. The vertical axis crosses at the hypothetical point corresponding to the movie-as-documentary; its upper limit is the Great Wheel (the epiphany of Europe), its lower the chase in the sewers which culminates in Lime's assent to his execution (and his ascent to it, his failure to climb out through the grille back into his ambiguous evilness). Horizontally speaking, and quite simply, the story is wonderfully told.

THE THIRD MAN AS MYTH: The movie creates a twentieth-century myth of sorts: 'the small operator trying to get rich on the surface of a total waste' (Andrew Sinclair), and what that entails. The myth of scientific progress—penicillin being the mid-twentieth-century drug—is answered with a myth of decadence and cynicism. The figure of Harry Lime could be a parody of the mythic Robin Hood: Lime, living a comparable undercover life (the Russian

sector as Sherwood Forest) has Robin Hood's irrepressibility, roguishness and charm, although interested only in making himself rich, while his sympathy, such as it is, for the poor is their undoing. Colonel Calloway as a Sheriff of Nottingham working for Good.

The mythopoeic power of the film and the actuality of the setting in Vienna, the postwar profiteering, the European catastrophe which has led to the situation of 'total waste' are joint reasons why the characters and their doings often seem 'archetypal': Holly and Anna in an archetypal courtship, Harry the archetypal 'best friend'. Harry's very surname resonates with symbolic possibility: it connotes quicklime (for disposing of bodies), birdlime ('a viscous sticky substance prepared from the bark of the holly [my italics] and used for catching small birds'—O.E.D.), lime-fingeredness (thievishness), limelight, and the lime that like holly is green. (The aptness of Martins' Christian name is lucky: the

our experience as *The Waste Land*. Certainly this 'well-made film' shows that the deepest currents can run beneath an untroubled surface (for the brazen camera angles and lighting effects are no mere experimentalism). The high-brow/low-brow distinction is essentially inapplicable; and *The Third Man* calls into question the idea of the 'art-movie'.

FOLLY OF AN OBSESSION: These reflections, traces, memoranda: the notation of an unwritten, perhaps—since the film has absolute priority and cannot be translated, raided, replaced—an unwritable project. Might one develop an equal obsession with . . . *Casablanca*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Smiles of a Summer Night*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Psycho*, *Death in Venice*, *The Dead* . . . ?

HARRY LIME'S AFTERLIFE: The name and something of the character, and of course the theme-tune, were used for a television series featuring Michael Rennie. In it we met a decriminalised



Carol Reed and Orson Welles.

character began life as 'Rollo', a name which Joseph Cotten found unacceptably homosexual, though to my ear 'Holly' is worse.)

Harry as 'third man' might be a cynical allusion to the mysterious figure of the resurrected Christ who joins two of his disciples on the road to Emmaeus. Harry, too, we remember, has been 'resurrected'—albeit as Antichrist. (Harry says he believes in God.) The word 'third', the numeral 3, are in any case assured of mysterious, mythic significance. The movie's own mythical status has been established by increasingly frequent allusion from afar—as, for example, in Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), or Walter Hill's *Extreme Prejudice* (1987), or in the title of Clive James' recent collection of essays: *Snake-Charmers in Texas*.

POPULISM: Total waste and a 'third man' happen to be two constituents of Eliot's famous esoteric poem, and we may legitimately if provocatively wonder whether Reed's movie—a box-office sensation—doesn't say as much about

Lime—at worst an adventurer, at best positively a goody. The series was based on newspaper stories published as *The Lives of Harry Lime* (*News of the World*, 1952), some of them attributed to Orson Welles himself. I saw these television programmes as a child, so gaining a pre-disposition to the movie (and its music) which I experienced for the first time at the age of 16 or 17, sitting at home with my father late one evening. The black-and-white, shadowy world of the movie is the world of my parents and grandparents, the world before I was born.

FINAL DISTINCTION of *The Third Man*: simply its realism, its complete seriousness. How plausible the dialogue! How consistently convincing the actors! Welles is a paragon, and the film is completely infused with him, but the others are superb, and the combination of English, American and Austrian talents is remarkable in itself. The movie climbs effortlessly to its artistic summit. It is exemplary and unique. . . .

BEINEIX

'I think this film was really ahead of its time, in the sense that the cinema has, for a long time, been marked by naturalism, even verism. It has had to look like real life. Yet for the last four or five years this reality has been increasingly transcended by colour, by extraordinarily designed sets and by a certain sense of play (which has nothing to do with reality). The auteur doesn't speak truth; he speaks otherwise.'

Thus speaks the 'original' Jean-Jacques Beineix to Denis Parent in a series of reflections published recently in France to coincide with the release of *Roselyne et les Lions*, the latest offering from France's most gifted and controversial 'New New Wave director'. The film that was 'ahead of its time' was *The Moon in the Gutter*, whose unpopularity with critics and public alike left a permanent scar on the director's psyche.

Beineix is a fighter, however, as he is quick to point out, supplementing the 'auteur theory' with pugilistic metaphors reminiscent of Norman Mailer. He is able to take a punch, which is just as well, since the signs are that *Roselyne et les Lions* is likely to

• DAVID RUSSELL •

send him back to the canvas for another count. For as the creatures of Jean-Paul Goude's postmodern and spectacularist imagination marched in triumph down the Champs-Élysées last 14 July, Beineix's lions could be heard only in one solitary art-house in Montparnasse, where their roar was silenced after a few brief weeks.

Yet Goude and Beineix have much in common. *Roselyne et les Lions* is of the

same family of (post)modernity as Goude's Bicentennial extravaganza. The two directors are of the same generation and cultural descent, and both are busy sketching the future of cinema and spectacle for those who are interested. At the moment Goude is in the ascendant, but it is Beineix's failures and achievements which are among the most audacious and instructive in the cinema today.

♦ Who's that man?

Arriving on the cinema scene apparently from nowhere with *Diva* (1980), whose audacious mixture of film noir, opera and art-house styles failed to thrill his producers, but not the audience at the Montreal festival where it was first shown, Beineix's meteoric rise was followed by an equally meteoric fall. *Moon in the Gutter* (1983) gained

Moon in the Gutter: Nastassja Kinski.



him a reputation for indulgence and megalomania of Stroheimian proportions. However, the huge success of *Betty Blue* (1985) restored faith in his ability to reach a wide audience with his idiosyncratic approaches to style, character and narrative (albeit without the more baroque touches).

Offers came flooding in from America, the land of the cinema which he claimed most to admire. There was talk of a film with Madonna, a remake of *The Blue Angel* and then of *Betty Blue* (neither of which materialised); then there was Beineix's own long-cherished project, *Bats*, a film about vampires in New York, which failed to attract any of the majors (although David Puttnam tried for a while to interest Columbia). Soon Beineix started to speak the language of disillusionment with the very America he once worshipped, and, like Wim Wenders, he returned home, somewhat chastened and full of stories about the iniquities of the American production system.

Unlike Wenders, however, Beineix has always regarded advertising (some, not all) as a creative challenge. The 'failure' of *Moon in the Gutter* actually enhanced his reputation in the world of advertising—which is hardly surprising, given the film's extraordinarily high production values and hallucinatory use of the visual language of advertising—and he became much in demand. Around 1985, while he was working on the script adaptation for *Betty Blue*, he made a commercial for the paint company Valentine, in which a panther prowls silkily beneath the wistful eye of

a painter. (This scene finds itself replayed towards the end of *Betty Blue*, but this time with a white cat and a writer, Zorg.) The commercial required the services of a lion-tamer, Thierry le Portier, to 'direct' the panther, and out of this meeting came the concept of *Roselyne et les Lions*, very loosely based on le Portier's memoirs. An AIDS information film which he made for the French Ministry of Health brought Beineix together with the young actor Gérard Sandoz, who plays le Portier in *Roselyne*. Meanwhile, le Portier himself was also much in demand overseeing the fight sequence between the puma and the cub in Jean-Jacques Annaud's *The Bear*. The young and very beautiful Isabelle Pasco, with whom Beineix has been living, was given the starring role of Roselyne. It is out of these heterogeneous elements and chance couplings that dreams and sometimes films are made.

In France there is talk of a neo-baroque school forming the vanguard of a 'New French New Wave', comprising Beineix, Luc Besson and Leos Carax. The features of this school are supposedly a certain fetishism of style, in particular the iconographies of advertising and youth sub-cultures, and a fascination with the virtuosity of surface effects. In other words, a form of post-modernist cinema deliberately without depth and endlessly allusive. However, while there are certainly many aspects of Besson's *Subway* which remain resolutely comic-book in superficiality, it is hard to see how the description applies to Beineix (let alone Carax). While it

is true that all these directors are fascinated by style, only Beineix has succeeded in evolving a distinctive style of his own.

♦ 'Style: all that is not technique'

It is impossible to talk about modern French cinema without talking about style. From the New Wave onwards, concern with style has been everywhere apparent, whether in characters (Belmondo imitating Bogart in *A Bout de Souffle*), in narratives (Truffaut's 'explosion of genres'), in cinematographic practices (Raoul Coutard's 'faster' shooting styles, particularly for Godard, or the more self-consciously composed and 'painterly' styles evident in Rohmer and Tavernier), or in thematic concerns (How does style itself communicate with the world? A question which all French film-makers seem to pose almost all the time). In one of Bresson's Notes on Cinematography, style is defined as 'all that is not technique', and it should be remembered that the *politique des auteurs*, to which all contemporary French directors are heir (for better or worse), is founded on the concept of style (*mise-en-scène*) as vision or interpretation of the world. It is not a matter of fashion but metaphysics.

The negative face of style is that it can lead to vacuity, fetishism, cliché, burlesque. Godard's cinema is the long, and perhaps impossible, attempt to turn this negative into a positive and rescue substance out of vacuity ($-1 \times -1 = +1$). Beineix, however, is entirely at home with this negative face. While he has recognised the possible vacuity and

Diva: Dominique Pinon, Frédéric Andrei.



fetishism of style, he none the less insists on exploring it, and, indeed, retaining a belief in its possible value, since that, in essence, is the world in which we live today. In the contemporary mass circulation of images, we believe in things which we know have no substance, and we continue to enjoy them despite this, and perhaps all the more so.

If style is, then, the metaphysics of our identity and the way we choose to relate ourselves to the world, it has to be added that we choose to live an imaginary life within the world. Beineix's films are, more or less, explorations of the delights and dangers of these modes of imaginary living. The postboy Jules in *Diva*, the lovers Zorg and Betty in *Betty Blue*, the lion-tamers Roselyne and Thierry do not simply inhabit worlds within worlds. They inhabit universes of the imagination composed entirely of sounds and images which they have appropriated for themselves. This is why choice of clothes, colours, living spaces, surfaces, icons, lighting arrangements, modes of transport, posters, music, even ways of killing people, has to match precisely the imagination of the character and the image-world he or she inhabits. This world, moreover, has about it something of the aura of the sacred.

As Mircea Eliade has argued in *The Sacred and the Profane*, non-religious man has yet to be born; in the absence of systematised religion and dogma, he will seek the signs of the sacred elsewhere, in the objects and discourses around him and with which he can

enter into a quasi-religious relationship. The sacred will be debased (become more mundane), but, for all that, not desacralised. In the contemporary world, it is unavoidable that we should seek the signs of the sacred in clothes, advertisements, posters, high-technology, prestigious 'marks' (Rolls-Royce cars, Rolex watches, Nagra tape-recorders), movie stars (Nastassja Kinski), compact discs and, finally, among all the iconography which is mass-marketed in what McLuhan terms the 'mythic mode' which characterises the discourse of our electronic media.

'Don't touch that, it's sacred!' Jules shouts when Alba, the Vietnamese girl, examines his Nagra tape-recorder. The tragedy of Gérard (Gérard Depardieu) in *Moon in the Gutter* is that despite the promise of 'Try Another World', the constantly recurring caption of the drink advertisement outside his window, itself linked to the make-believe world of Loretta (Nastassja Kinski), he is condemned to remain in the prison of his own decrepit proletarian universe.

If the fabric of the imaginative life is to be woven out of mass-produced symbols, like the bricolage of primitive consciousness described by Claude Lévi-Strauss (and in the age of electronic media it is we, according to McLuhan, who are the New Primitives), then the match has to be chosen carefully, metaphysically; it must 'vibrate' in a way which is in harmony with a symbolism of the self and the cosmos. That sounds pretentious and, indeed, *Diva* is often referred to as a 'pretentious' movie, because it does embrace these

themes (much to the consternation of Beineix's producers, who thought they were commissioning a routine thriller). Yet the seduction of *Diva* is in its extraordinary sets and the way in which, through combinations of light, shadow, spatial relations, carefully chosen and positioned objects, forms and graphics and matched colours, something is created which is distinctly otherworldly while being firmly, almost prosaically, situated in the real world.

♦ 'An excuse to change universe'

Throughout Beineix's work the 'real' world (the inescapable one) is a fallen world, ruled by, for example, the criminals in *Diva* intent on killing Jules, and the Taiwanese businessmen trying to pirate a recording of the voice of the diva, Cynthia Hawkins; by the exploitative owner of the beach huts for whom Zorg works in *Betty Blue*, or the doctors in the asylum who wish to give Betty electric shock treatment; and by the circus owners and muscleman's law of the strongest in *Roselyne et les Lions*. In *Moon in the Gutter* the real world is that of the docks, violence, prostitution, incest and generalised brutality into which Gérard is born and of which he is a resistant but traumatised victim. Beineix is antipathetic to this brutal real world—and, by extension, the world of 'realism'. A study of his approach to lighting helps to bring this out.

Nothing distinguishes modern French cinematography more than its reverence for, and unique skill with, natural light. In *Semiotics and Lighting*, Sharon

Moon in the Gutter: Gérard Depardieu.



A. Russell notes: 'There are certain similarities in the visual style of the modern French cinema and that of the French Impressionists. Both share the respect for the natural world, which is manifested in an attempt to capture the moment rather than recreate it in a studio.' Raoul Coutard is quoted: 'A film cameraman ought never to let himself forget that the eye of the spectator is naturally attuned to full daylight. Daylight has an inhuman ability to be always perfect, whatever the time of day. Daylight captures the real living texture of the face or the look of a man . . . ' Russell goes on to show how this approach to lighting can be contrasted almost point for point with the 'classic' approach of Hollywood cinematography. What is of interest to us is that it can also be contrasted point for point with the approach of Beineix.

♦ 'The studio is my jungle'

In *Betty Blue* there is a scene where Zorg enters a large room and plays the piano. Not only is the room large, but it contains two very big windows overlooking the street, and what would usually happen in a modern French film is that the set would be lit uniquely with the daylight from the windows, irrespective of the shadows this would cast on one side of the room and the character's face. In *Betty Blue*, however, the daylight is, somewhat astonishingly, filtered out through yellow gel placed on the windows, thus enabling the scene to be shot entirely with artificial light.

To use light as a fill-in for daylight is

one thing, and common practice; systematically to filter out daylight, however, goes against the whole trend of modern French cinematography. Yet Beineix does this all the time. What is so striking about the interiors in *Diva* (Jules' apartment, Gorodish's flat, even Cynthia Hawkins' room—in which the light from outside her window is 'burnt out') is the absence of natural light (which makes for a very unusual kind of living space). *Moon in the Gutter* is shot almost entirely in a studio, where everything is swamped with the powerful, unfluctuating beams from photofloods and arc-lights. As for *Roselyne et les Lions*, if the film begins in daylight, there is an inexorable pull to the studio-recreated circus lions' cage, where the film really takes place.

Exactly the opposite is the case in *Betty Blue*, where the film moves progressively towards more and more daylight set-ups and hence the inevitable death of Betty, who inhabits a world incompatible with outside reality. This dialectic between studio and daylight is one of the key aspects of Beineix's style, so much so that it transcends even the demands of narrative diegesis. In *Diva*, for example, Jules steps straight out of an early morning scene in the diva's (artificially lit) hotel room and into a night-time exterior chase-sequence. The night is motivated purely by the psychological menace associated with the outside world, and such is Beineix's skill at drawing us into these co-existing universes, that we hardly notice the continuity problem in the transition.

Where have we seen this kind of

lighting before? In Hollywood, to be sure (but not to this degree of stylisation, except in Coppola's *One From the Heart*, most of which is situated at a remove, in a fantasy night sequence). In fact, we do not need to go to Hollywood to see it. We see it every day. In commercials, advertising hoardings, placards and neon signs. In glossy magazines, fashion photography, shop windows, car showrooms, amusement arcades, shopping precincts, restaurants . . . Beineix has simply made of it a new kind of daylight—the daylight in which the images of our culture live and breathe. As he pointed out during an appearance at the National Film Theatre, the children of today are brought up amid this light.

♦ The kidnapping of colour

Beineix has some interesting things to say about advertising: 'I am personally convinced that advertising has never invented anything except what artists have invented. On the other hand, it has been able to capture, inflect, parody, imitate. It appropriated the Beautiful which the cinema of the New Wave had rejected, which made certain ignorant critics say that beautiful equals advertising. It kidnapped colour, which the cinema no longer violated, so preoccupied was it with being true to life, which made certain critics say that colour equals advertising. It dispensed with stories, which the narrative cinema was unable to do without, so some critics said that a film without a story equals advertising. Finally, it generally captured youth, whose aspirations the

Betty Blue: Béatrice Dalle.



ageing cinema no longer translated, so that some critics said that youth cinema equals advertising.'

For his part, as well as being indebted to advertising for work, Beineix is in no doubt that advertising not only enabled him to refine his skill as a film-maker, but also, paradoxically, gave him freedom: 'Once liberated from the constraints of the story-board and the brief, I had the time and space to be able to express myself at a personal level.'

Instead of decrying advertising from a higher position, Beineix uses it as a consumer uses a product, but with greater licence. One might compare the treatment of daylight in his films with the fate of the voice in *Diva*. It has become lost, irretrievable, or rather overwhelmed by the demands and the conspiracies of the modern mass-media. Not being a moralist (although he comes close to this in *Diva*), Beineix does not take up a position of cultural pessimism, which is the response of a Wim Wenders. Instead he sees his task principally as one of accommodation to this reality. The image may well now always be only a commercial proposition (Godard assures us that it is), but that does not prevent us from putting these images into the service of our own solitary searches for the sacred. For Jules, this involves a woman's voice; for Beineix, cinema. How to hold on to a voice when sounds exist only in digital recordings is a problem similar to that of holding on to cinema when images no longer exist in daylight.

For, as Beineix well knows, the real threat to cinema does not come from

television: the television image is too domesticated to challenge the cinematic image. The threat to cinema comes from commercials, advertising and publicity. From pop videos and lavish promotion sequences. For it is here that a genuine competition for the size, quality, mythic potential and spectacular impact of the cinematic image is taking place, as Goude's Bicentennial march amply demonstrated. The danger for cinema in the 1990s is that it will fragment into a series of spectacular publicity sequences—which is more or less the direction Steven Spielberg has already taken it. It is a question of money. But it is also a question of the spaces in which images live these days. They do not live in daylight. To find them and reappropriate them, you have to go into their world.

This, at least, is Beineix's position. It is not a question of fighting fire with fire (he is no militant), but simply of recognising where cinema now takes place. Beineix is no moralist; but, then, he does have Jules give the diva back her voice (by returning the tape). In Delacorta's novel, Jules and Gorodish split the proceeds from selling the tape to the highest bidder—a very significant change in an otherwise extremely faithful adaptation. In *Moon in the Gutter*, Loretta's attempts to turn Gérard into a reproducible image (with her camera) are negated with a slap in the face, while her own advertising-billboard reality is shown to lead to nowhere but death (the 'marriage' that occurs among them takes place in the midst of corpses).

Beneath the surface allegory in *Roselyne et les Lions* of expulsion from Paradise and initiation into the world of work and performance, lies an allegory of advertising. Roselyne, like Loretta, is a living advertisement. That is her reality. The circus managers instantly recognise this—as do we, and Beineix—and what started out as the story of two young lion-tamers becomes, inexorably, the story of Roselyne's face, body, gestures, dress. It is a film not about lions or lion-tamers but about this unreal, advertising perfection which lands in our midst, much as Loretta walks into the life of Gérard in *Moon in the Gutter*.

The fascination is in how this beauty can be used, what angles it can be shot from, what purity of line and colour it can embody. In the end Roselyne is the film, just as she is the lion-tamer, with Thierry now reduced to death, disguised as a skeleton. Echoes of *A Star Is Born*; but is there not in this story something of a prophecy? The seduction of the Advertisement is greater than (the) Man, greater than (the) Film, greater than (the) Spectators, greater than (the) Director, greater than (the) Business Organisation which commissions it. And as for the lions, just look at Beineix's publicity poster, dominated by Isabelle Pasco, cracking a whip of high sexual charge.

If Beineix can, perhaps unwittingly, make of advertising and advertising style the crypto-subject of his film, it is because he is deeply engaged with its relationship to the cinema of pure poetry to which he is committed. If advertising has 'kidnapped' colour and

Roselyne et les Lions: Isabelle Pasco.



the Beautiful, while the cinema was distracted by its pursuit of the Real, then it is now no longer possible to achieve what Beineix is striving for without having advertising as a principal reference. And this is the key to his work, and why it is often misunderstood.

It is automatically assumed by cinephiles that the cinema is the only possible reference for the poetic. The standard cinephile attitude towards advertising runs through the work of Godard and Wenders, up to a film like *Jesus of Montreal*, where advertising is part of the corruption of man (towards the end of the film, Montreal's Jesus collapses in front of an advertising billboard featuring, of course, Montreal's Judas). Again, as with Wim Wenders, this critique of 'low' art-forms is part of a general cultural pessimism, where advertising is seen as capitalist and illusory, while the cinema retains a receding afterglow of communality and religion. Nowhere is this clearer, perhaps, than in Wenders' *Tokyo-Ga*, where the lost cinema of Ozu is the only reality against which contemporary and consumerist Tokyo can be measured.

◆ 'Why do you need a white car?'

Beineix uses advertising techniques as part of his attempt to achieve the operatic. Of *Moon in the Gutter*, he says: 'I wanted a great poetic film à la Cocteau. A film of images. I felt there was a song there, an opera, with only the singers missing. But the music and scenic space were present. With their gestures slowed down, all the movements of the actors formed a choreography.' Time and again he refers to dispensing with story and finding a language of images, a music of colour; in short a cinematic poetry which has more in common with advertising than with conventional narrative-realist cinema: 'I don't like everything to be comprehensible. I like what is implied, what is impressionist, what causes echoes in our culture of the image. I like to call on exoticism, signal my images with exotic representations. The cinema should be generous and luxurious.'

It is this tendency which has earned him and the other 'New New Wave' directors the title of 'néo-baroque'. In *Roselyne et les Lions*, a female spectator watching Roselyne's climactic number exclaims, 'How baroque!'; which should, perhaps, alert us not to take the adjective too seriously. However, the definition of baroque as a style which seeks to astonish by virtuosity and dazzle through movement, lighting contrasts and unusual perspectives clearly has some relevance for discussing Beineix's work. But it also has a relevance for discussing advertising; and that is the point. In our contemporary 'culture of the image' the same objects, the same forms, the same material, the same state of mind, even, can belong equally to publicity and to art. All the more so since the styles of Godard and Wenders, as well as Beineix, are to be found every day assimilated in virtually any tv commercial.

The degree to which Beineix is committed to a pursuit of the mythical over the real and of a symphonic poetry of images over narrative is not in doubt. *Moon in the Gutter* and *Roselyne et les Lions* bear witness to the extraordinary energy and imagination invested in this pursuit. What is less certain is the degree to which other people are prepared to follow him. Beineix is beginning to get the reputation of an uncontrollable and unpredictable talent. Yet his passion for making big, bigger and even bigger films commands respect, if only through the grandiosity of his ambition. The problem is in reconciling this ambition both with what is possible in the industry and with audience expectation.

Although Beineix seldom now has a good word to say about America, this is probably a passing phase, since at the level of spectacle he has much more in common with Hollywood than with, say, the French New Wave. Moreover, the fact that he will always want to make 'big' films makes his position within the French film industry very problematic. Apparently he set out with the idea of making *Roselyne et les Lions à la Ozu*, with fixed camera positions and only ten shots. And it would be a mistake to think he was joking. Beineix does have a great nostalgia for classical purity in the cinema; 'One day the ambition will be born to make a short film. A wistful thought one hears from the mouths of many directors.' The problem is not only that he knows he is not destined for such films, but, more importantly, that such films, as Wenders laments, are no longer possible.

It is possible for a cinematic craft to become extinct fairly rapidly, as was the case after the introduction of the talkie. Hitchcock's craft is already extinct—it cannot be practised today, except as pastiche (as in so many shower sequences). It is quite conceivable that European cinema, in the sense in which we currently use the term—a cinema oriented towards mental rather than action images, and involving European traditions of cultural history, thought and conceptions of identity—is to all intents and purposes already dead, or plugged into a life-support system consisting of a few prestigious directors living off reputations secured in the 1950s and 60s. Certainly, as far as the cinema-going public is concerned, 'European cinema' is simply a museum item. In the light of this actual situation we can better understand why Beineix has chosen to work as he does—with one eye on America—and why he is not particularly friendly towards the French New Wave.

Diva is far and away Beineix's best film—in fact it is probably one of the most important films of the 1980s. Those that consider it too much of a comic-strip do little justice to the form from which Alain Resnais believes he learned everything he knows about the cinema. *Diva* is a genre film updated, a skilful interweaving of American and European traditions. It may well prove

to be something of a one-off in this respect; the only moment in a filmmaker's career when a question is posed with striking originality simply through breaking new stylistic ground. Experience shows that when this happens, it tends to be with a director's first film, after which the system realigns itself and the director realigns himself or herself with it.

In the case of Beineix, it is clear that *Diva* was a constant battle between his digressive, imagistic, 'baroque' imagination and his producer's insistence on a tight thriller according to the conventions. This battle is detailed in Denis Parent's book. The title was hated (This is a thriller, not an opera film!); Beineix's style was attacked (Why do you need a white car? Why is that crane-shot necessary?), and the film was very nearly not distributed at all due to the production company's disappointment with the results. Yet what is also clear is the necessity of this conflict between director and production system, since out of it something unique was created, however haphazardly.

Since *Diva*, Beineix has had the power and prestige to assume a fully 'auteurist' status, especially in a country as enamoured with directors as France, and this has been both to the detriment of a genuinely creative process (the battles are now with himself), and to the *politique des auteurs*, which was never designed totally to alienate producers from any role in the shaping of a film's artistic content. It is true that Beineix has worked with other scriptwriters, but none with the originality or talent of Delacorta, and Beineix now considers himself to be the chief scriptwriter of his films. Paradoxically, it is the French cinema's greatest 'auteur' who is most in need of a strong producer if the flights of his imagination are to take wing.

The symbolic importance of Beineix's successes and failures, however, should not be underestimated. Just as he is at the forefront of the postmodern dialogue between publicity and cinema, comic-strips and narrative, opera and thriller, high and low art forms, so he is also part of the great European-American cinematic debate. For while other French film-makers are content to work in the French film industry, and while the European art-cinema continues to understand Hollywood as the great enemy, Beineix, through cultural inheritance, imagination, cinematographic style and ambition, is destined continually to combine and synthesise the two cultures, however happily or unhappily.

That the synthesis is not an easy one goes without saying, which is why *Diva* is such an extraordinary achievement, both tight and economical thriller and visually astonishing and digressive art-film. But even the failures are, in their own ways, contributions to the working out of the future of European cinema, which is likely to be one of the key problems for the industry and public in the 1990s. ■

Who writes film history? First the spectator, then the critic. Later comes the researcher, the academic historian and finally—and in an increasingly aggressive mood—the film theorist. Yet someone who does not usually write about movies can, consciously or not, substantially influence all this work. This is the archivist, the person who is supposed to give the specialist access to research materials, to make possible the synthesis (or, more commonly nowadays, close analysis) of the traces which the past leaves for the future.

The relationship between those charged with the preservation of moving images and those who interpret them had until recently been regarded as fixed. The archive was the guardian of what contemporary critics had declared it important to preserve and to show. The specialist had either to accept this heritage, for which the archive was the spokesman, or try to challenge it by initiating a discussion or stirring a controversy about, say, an author, a production company or a genre.

The first archivists—men such as Jacques Ledoux in Belgium, Henri Langlois in France and James Card in the United States—were passionate cinephiles determined to establish the cinema as one of the arts. The work of restoration, although very important, was not strictly necessary to their primary purpose. A second generation of archivists, with the welcome help of scholars, has now begun to find its way through the great tide of film and paper, comparable to Jorge Luis Borges' *Library of Babel*, left behind by the pioneers. In the long run, these efforts will certainly increase our knowledge of film's past. At present, however, the process is throwing up some unexpected and challenging effects.

Statistics are not available, but over the last ten years the number of requests to view films on archive premises has been expanding at an enormous rate; and at the same time the technological gap between the most advanced archives and those where the organisation is still loose and the funding insufficient has grown wider than ever. Some archives, such as the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., the University of California at Los Angeles, the National Film Archive in London and the Svenska Filminstitutet in Stockholm, have developed complex cataloguing systems, some of which aim to assemble all the filmographic information available in the archives of one country. (The NAMID system of the National Centre for Film and Video Preservation in the United States is a case in point.)

On the other hand, other institutions, because of the endemic lack of financial resources, are still battling with card-indexes which have not been adequately updated since the early 1960s. This is one reason why, out of 80 archives which are members of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF), fewer than half were able to provide even partial information on

ARCHIVE

PAOLO CHERCHI USAI DISCUSSES THE NEW DEMANDS

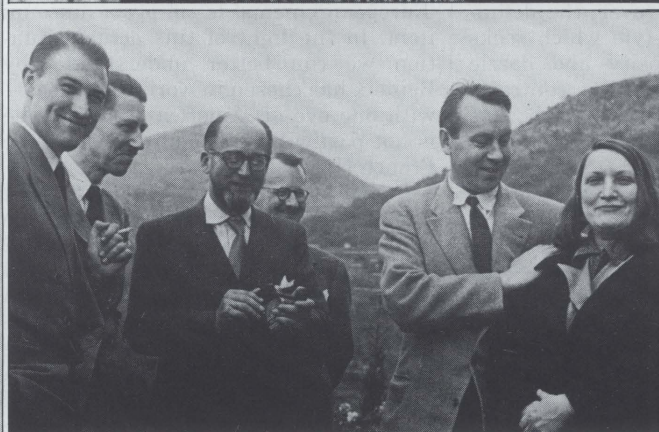
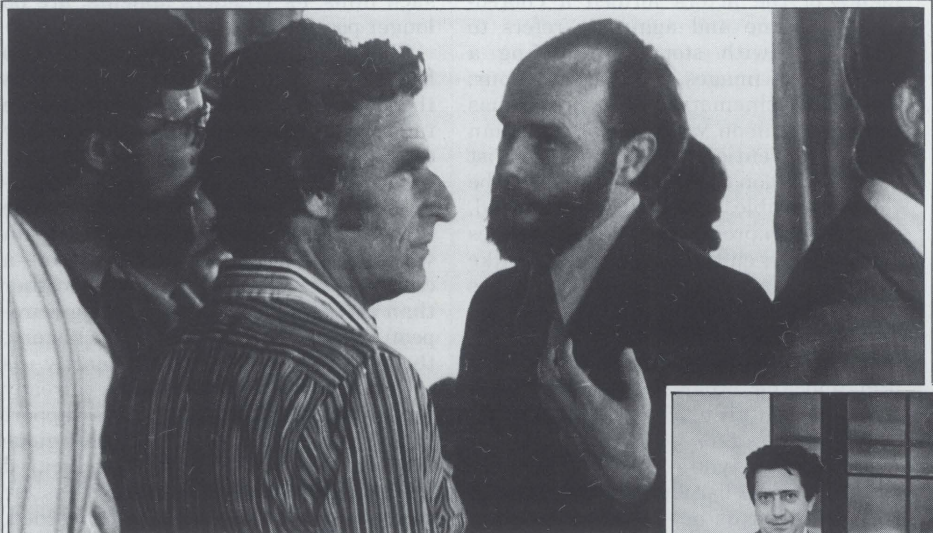
their holdings. The publication of a basic catalogue of all short fiction films held by 33 FIAF members and observers (*Treasures from the Film Archives*, edited by Ronald S. Magliozzi, Scarecrow Press, 1988) is not only the sign of a new cultural consciousness, but an answer to pressure for public access. It also demonstrates how uneven the path is which may lead film archives to an information network comparable to those available in national and university libraries.

For several years, the only available list of holdings in FIAF archives—better known as *Embryo*—was considered strictly confidential (as the list of silent feature films still is). This situation was due partly to the delicate relationship between collectors and curators and partly to the unresolved question of copyright protection versus archival holdings. Such a policy of secrecy, however, was beginning to threaten the

very existence of FIAF as a cultural institution, and there is little doubt that the recent signs of change will open a new era in the history of the archives.

Films once considered so unimportant that no preservation programme would have mentioned them are now regarded as essential for the cinema researcher, as well as for specialists in the social sciences, industry, medicine and sport. Indeed, we are now witnessing what the supporters of the philosophy of 'preserve well, preserve everything' have always wanted. The work of the film archivist does not entail abrogating scholarly judgments, nor passively accepting time's laws of natural selection. Instead, it means considering *all* moving images as documents of potential significance.

At the same time, it is clear that this can rapidly lead to confusion, to institutional paralysis, to the construction of a massive labyrinth of film which, with the resources currently available, no



of BABEL

BEING MADE ON THE WORLD'S FILM ARCHIVES

computer programme will ever be able to control. It is not that the labyrinth is limitless, but that it has too many false trails, too many variables. And its contents require frequent checks to keep pace with changes in the films' optical and physical characteristics.

Put bluntly, there is no ratio between the number of moving images produced and those preserved even in the most specialised institutions. According to the photographic historian Beaumont Newhall, a recent estimate—impossible to confirm, but nevertheless fascinating—indicates that some 200

million still photographs are shot every day in the world. The amount of film and magnetic tape consumed to produce moving images must be no less impressive. Consider television soap-opera. Scholars increasingly ask to see soap-operas in archives: yet to house just one *telenovela* takes an inordinate amount of space. Production companies are willing to deposit their work in archives, but curators are not necessarily keen to have it. Material will inevitably have to be turned down; and every day hundreds of hours of footage will be irredeemably lost or destroyed.

In other words, film curators still need—more than ever—to make thankless choices. Despite their faith in the motto 'nitrate can't wait', in their own objectivity during the selection process and in their efforts to interpret the needs of researchers for materials previously neglected, archive policy is still largely a product of the struggle with circumstances.

The aforementioned criteria are widespread within FIAF institutions; yet we are still far behind the degree of sophistication demonstrated by the curators of fine arts museums. Some safety prints can't wait either, due to the notorious process of decomposition known as the

'vinegar syndrome'. But most archives just haven't the time to cope with this problem, in a situation where preservation officers can barely follow the life and decay of collections growing with overwhelming rapidity. In this respect, every cataloguing system is an attempt to organise a census of a baffling, elusive population.

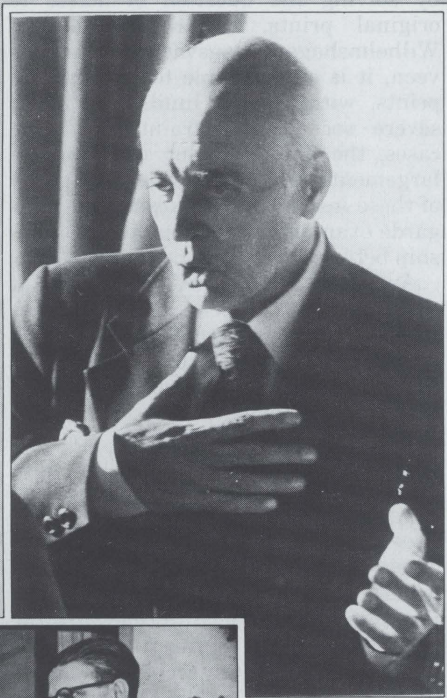
The time when an archivist could remember the title and condition of every film in his collection has long vanished. Such mental files are yesterday's history. Henri Langlois did not need to consult his notebooks to check the availability of Marcel L'Herbier's films, or the condition of a print of *Battleship Potemkin*. What could he have said to researchers who write, as they do today, asking for films showing trains at the beginning of the century or young ladies listening to the radio in Germany after the Second World War?

Many researchers of the 1980s wax indignant if the archivist hesitates before answering. 'What? You don't lend videocassettes of your films?' This refrain is often heard; and matters will not become easier until teachers and students establish guidelines about what kind of materials should be studied and how these studies can most usefully be undertaken. Television networks and film-makers now have relatively easy access to specialised agencies dealing with footage for film and video programmes, but it is unlikely that film museums and national archives will be willing to enter the competition.

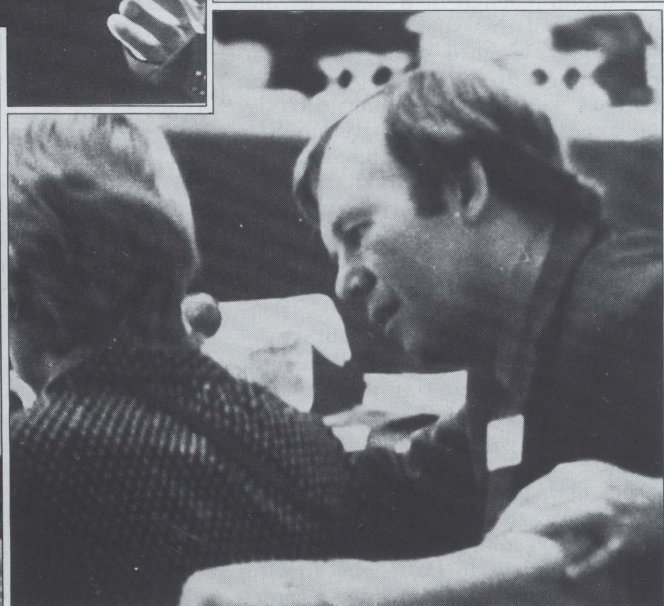
Researchers do have some power over film archives. They can influence institutional policies of acquisition and preservation: which images should be preserved, restored and shown, and how these images should be made available to the public. What does a researcher ask of an archive? To know what is in the vaults; to have a concise, up-to-date, cross-referenced catalogue. To view films in improved conditions: viewing-tables are a prerequisite—and, incidentally, welcomed by archives, since they save the cost of a projectionist and lessen the wear and tear on the film.

No Film Studies Centre, however, can be run without at least one research assistant to demonstrate proper machine use and to ensure that each film runs smoothly through the sprockets of each viewing-table. Despite the growing demand for video, most researchers still insist on viewing *films*—and preferably in good quality 35mm. The dupe 16mm prints of the 50s are rightly regarded with less and less favour. Today's researcher also needs to know: details of print source; availability of frame enlargements; data on copyright ownership; secondary sources such as articles of the period. All of which, if put together, is likely to short-circuit the archive's organisational structures and cause it to react in the worst possible way—by restricting access to the premises. What should be done?

Let us go back to the moment the



Archivists. Left: Vladimir Pogacic. Far left, top: John Barnes, Ray Edmondson. Bottom: Jan de Vaal, Ernest Lindgren (left), Marie Meerson (right). Centre: Henri Langlois (left), Jerzy Toeplitz (right). Below: David Francis.



scholar and the archivist first come into contact. The researcher must establish that he is engaged on a serious and well-motivated project; the archivist, in turn, must do his best to make the most obscure corners of his collection accessible. The historian who comes with a detailed list of titles arranged chronologically and alphabetically is a rare bird. More frequently, the curator's desk is piled with letters asking to see 'all Cedric Gibbons' films', 'all surviving copies of Republic Pictures features', or to send 'a complete printout of Hitchcock's movies' and sometimes 'a listing of all archival holdings'.

The archivist can say truthfully that his organisation has only an alphabetical list of titles and that he needs a more specific enquiry. If, on the other hand, he has an efficient hi-tech catalogue capable of producing a fast printout, it might be possible to begin work at the viewing-table with a range of titles already broken down by leading player, subject or nationality. Few archives, however, can produce such detailed information. For most, simply providing reasonable access to researchers is an immense step forward: films are now being shown that scholars have vainly pursued for decades. (The other side of the coin is that, despite official claims to the contrary, a number of FIAF institutions still remain barely accessible to the public.)

Convenient access, though, is not the whole story. Even when computerisation and good cataloguing habits are established, the principle of the ethics of research has still to be faced. Should the curator and his staff undertake research the scholar should have done himself? No, the archivist's duty is to make film accessible to the bona fide scholar, not to prepare the ground for the easiest completion of a research project or even to define its analytical framework. How can the archivist accept responsibility for choosing what the scholar should see or skip in order to save time and effort?

Consider the graduate student who, for the purposes of his dissertation, asks to see every film on social conflict in Britain. Make the further, highly improbable assumption that the archive can provide a list of such films available for study. The question remains: What is social conflict? The cataloguer's views may not accord with the scholar's. Furthermore, even if the archivist and the researcher agree on the definition, is it intellectually honest for the student to avoid studying films where social conflict is purposely excised from the narrative?

It could be argued that this is an extreme case, and that only an unprepared or dishonest researcher will treat the archive as a fruit tree ripe for shaking. Unfortunately, this is not always true. Sometimes the very fact that an archive is well organised can also become its curse. The British National Film Archive is rightly considered one of the most efficient institutions of its kind in the world, an archive where the serious researcher has the opportunity

to access an impressive quantity of material that would otherwise be difficult if not impossible to reach. The problem arises when the scholar requests access to facilities not because the films are there or because it is the only place where they exist, but simply as a matter of practical convenience. Why, then, are so many researchers from North America willing to bear heavy travel expenses in order to see films which exist in their own countries?

The official answer from FIAF is forthright. In her introduction to *Treasures from the Film Archives*, Eileen Bowser, Curator of the Film Department at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and one of the leaders of the new trend in archiving policy, writes: 'In the case of multiple copies existing in more than one archive, researchers are asked to first use the viewing facilities in their own countries. They should only request to see films in another country that cannot be seen in their own. If a study project entails the viewing of films of a specific nationality, it is recommended to apply first to the country of origin rather than going to a third country which may happen to have a good collection.'

The underlying purpose of this statement is clear, but its meaning can be pushed to further implications. Eileen Bowser asserts that 'when an archive is supported with the public funds of its country, its first obligation must be to its own citizens.' If several American archives contain a Hollywood film within their holdings, but none has yet preserved it for viewing on a safety print, restoration of this film would then become an American archival responsibility. But, of course, funds are not always available, and scholars who go overseas to view films which *should* be available in their own countries ought not to be penalised. Scholars and archives should rather cooperate in lobbying universities and public agencies for the necessary money.

It is important that the researcher and the curator engage in a dialogue, and one aspect of this should be about the availability of good, easily accessible prints. Since the researcher pays for the archive's services—most often directly, but sometimes, if the institution is a public body, indirectly—he has the right to expect the best available print of a film. But the archive should also canvass its clients about the state of its prints, to discover from the user's point of view which need renewing and repairing. And it should make a clear statement about the availability of video copies for some of the films most in demand, this being an ethical issue often disregarded for the sake of access facility and the protection of film materials.

The dialogue may not always be straightforward. Take the matter of frame enlargements. At the Cinéma-thèque Gaumont in Paris, the viewing machine is linked to a video-recorder

which automatically transforms a negative into a positive image. A built-in camera allows the scholar to take frame enlargements in real time without damaging the film. It is the best arrangement a researcher could imagine (assuming his willingness to accept a video-screen image). But could one ask for a similar service at, say, the Library of Congress?

The Gaumont archive preserves material to which Gaumont itself presumably has the rights and it can therefore decide whether the scholar may take frame enlargements. One purpose of the Library of Congress is to allow researchers access to prints, many of which have been deposited for copyright purposes. A recent interim ruling forbids researchers making frame enlargements from the filmstrip during viewings. And this is certainly an issue which will persist so long as scholars wish to illustrate their studies with frame reproductions rather than production stills.

Three European archives—the Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR of Berlin, the Danske Filmmuseum of Copenhagen and the Nederlands Filmmuseum of Amsterdam—have gained a reputation by solving the question of access to original prints. In the deposits of Wilhelmshagen, Bagsvaerd and Overveen, it is still possible to view nitrate prints, within strict limits and under severe security constraints. In some cases, the photographing of frame enlargements is allowed. The bold policy of these institutions makes them avant-garde examples of a productive relationship between scholars and archivists.

A different procedure is followed at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, where researchers are allowed to work directly on 16mm prints, but not on 35mm, unless a staff member takes the responsibility of handling the reels on the viewing-table. Before accusing MOMA of a lack of trust in the well-intentioned researcher, it would be best to recognise the cultural differences between the European concept of selective access and the American philosophy of general access to art objects. The latter is specifically intended to cope with the peculiar situation of film studies in the United States, where archivists receive requests for 'films on the concept of the cinematic apparatus in Weimar cinema', submitted by film professors who are puzzled when asked to distinguish between a 16mm and a 35mm print.

It is far too easy to attribute the responsibility for such ignorance to the video culture or the long-term effects of the 'secretive' policy maintained by some archives. Future curators must become not just technicians, historians, connoisseurs, managers and patient diplomats, but teachers and stoics, respecters of both the expert in cinema philology and the graduate student who, having ruined the perforations on the 16mm copy of a sound print, justified himself by claiming that he 'just wanted to project Side B of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*'. ■



EVGENI BAUER

— and the —

CINEMA OF NIKOLAI II

To participate, at the 1989 Pordenone Giornate del Cinema Muto, in the first major rediscovery of the cinema in Russia before the Revolution was very like Cook's arrival on Australian shores. There was the exhilaration of discovery, a vision of marvellous vistas—but also an awesome sense of the vast interior that remains to be explored. More than 2,000 films were made before 1917, and some 350 more were produced by private firms between 1917 and 1921. Of this total, at least 280 are preserved. (A high proportion in comparison with the survival rate elsewhere of films from this period.) Of these 280, Pordenone selected around 70, as the best and most representative. Even this small proportion was a revelation, overturning the received notions of such sparse history as we have.

The story of the cinema in Russia began in May 1896, when the ubiquitous Lumières sent a 17-year-old showman-photographer, Francis Doublier, to exploit their Cinematographe there. There is a well-known account of the new invention by a young journalist, Maxim Gorki, who saw it at the Nizhni Novgorod Fair. (This might be the place to dispel illusions of a peasant Maxim wide-eyed in a Petrushka fair-ground booth. The fair was actually a high-powered cultural event, 'The All-Russian Fair of Industry and Art'. The Cinematographe showman on this occasion, Charles Aumont, was in addition a notorious purveyor of prostitutes.)

Strangely, though Russian audiences loved 'The Illusions', it was twelve years before any kind of native production began. Pathé and Gaumont led the foreign firms that set up Russian offices;

and cinemas so mushroomed that by 1908 legislation to control their spread became necessary. In 1908, Pathé shot the first Russian film, for a series called *Picturesque Russia*. Gaumont followed suit; and the two men who were to dominate the first years of Russian cinema, Alexander Drankov and Alexander Khanzonkov, both went into production.

Drankov seems to have been a loud, vulgar showman with a sure sense of public taste and no scruples about stealing his rivals' ideas. Khanzonkov was cultivated, an impresario with an eye for talent, and often altruistic in his ambitions to develop the art and uses of cinema. When Khanzonkov's initial production venture failed, he temporarily withdrew to concentrate on distributing

Above: *Merchant Bashkirov's Daughter* (1913), directed by Nikolai Larin.

the French *films d'art*, which had considerable influence on early Russian production.

In September 1908, Drankov made the first Russian dramatic film, *Stenka Razin*, whose success set off an era of costume pictures, historical pictures and one-reel adaptations of Russian classics. The writer of *Stenka Razin* was Vasili Goncharov (1861-1915), who had lived out a quiet career as an official in the Ministry of Highways until grief at the death of his wife caused him to retire and dedicate himself to literature.

When he proved to have little aptitude in this field, he turned to cinema, went to Paris to see how things were done in the Pathé and Gaumont studios, and returned to become the leading exponent of historical films. Piotr Chardynin (1878-1934) was quickly promoted from the post of Goncharov's assistant (with special responsibility to soothe actors rattled by the director's uncertain temper) to be a director in his own right. He was soon to become one of the most prolific and eclectic directors of the period.

Chardynin's contemporary Jacob Protazanov (1881-1945) directed his first film, *The Fountain of Bakhisarai*, after Pushkin, late in 1909. Protazanov's development was initially slower, but the range of his career was to be phenomenal. In 1912, his dramatic reconstruction of the last days of Tolstoi, *Passing of a Great Old Man*, was prohibited on account of its offence to Countess Tolstoi. In the flourishing years from 1913 to the Revolution, working most fruitfully with the actor Mosjugin, Protazanov turned his hand to anything, from weepies (*How Sweet, How Fresh the Roses Were*) to *Dance of the Vampires*, *Queen of Spades* or *War and Peace*.

Keys of Happiness, a sentimental melodrama co-directed in 1913 with Vladimir Gardin, was one of the most successful films of the era. In the transitional period between the 1917 revolutions, Protazanov made the masterly *Father Sergius*, then emigrated via Constantinople to France. He was to return to the USSR in the 1920s to make the 'Constructivist' science-fiction spectacle

Aelita, as well as other such celebrated Soviet films as *His Call* and *The Forty-First*. His last film, *Nasreddin in Bokhara*, was made in 1943.

The historical film reached its zenith in late 1911 with *The Defence of Sevastopol*, running an unprecedented two hours. Khanzonkov himself directed the spectacular action sequences, for which he had the full cooperation of the Imperial Army, while Goncharov directed the wooden interior scenes. The performances of the Moscow Conservatoire were accompanied by a specially compiled score, sound effects, gunfire and explosions which made it hard for the projector beam to pierce the smoky atmosphere. The following year, Khan-



Raisa Reizen, a Russian femme fatale.

zonkov and Goncharov enjoyed comparable success with *1812*, and in 1913 Drankov and Khanzonkov were in keen rivalry with their celebrations of 300 years of the Romanov dynasty.

Already though in 1913 the Russian cinema was undergoing a transition. Such films as *Keys of Happiness* and *Sevastopol* signalled big business. In line with developments elsewhere in the world, the cinema strove for respectability by attracting fashionable writers and actors. New influences from abroad included the sophisticated modern-dress dramas arriving from Denmark, and the sensational adventures of Zigomar and the comedies of Max Linder from France. Like other countries, Russia experienced a sudden

burgeoning of fan magazines. Unlike other countries, however, Russia's cinema attracted an educated middle class rather than a working-class audience.

Stars emerged. The most prominent and most gifted was Ivan Mosjugin (1890-1939). Mosjugin took his métier seriously, writing for example, 'Creation is built on the internal expression, on your partner's hypnosis, on the pause, on disturbing allusions, on psychological innuendos.' His wife Natalia Lissenko had trained in the Moscow Art Theatre Studio; and Olga Gzovskaia abandoned the Moscow Art Theatre itself to become a film star. The handsome Maximov and Polonski both came from the Maly Theatre. Chardynin and Perestiani were gifted character actors as well as directors.

Other artists were recruited from the ballet, most notably the enchanting Vera Coralli, who went into films when an injury forced her temporarily to give up dancing. (She was able to overcome the objections of the Imperial Theatres thanks to the intercession of her protector, Prince Dimitri Pavlovsky; and achieved a place in history when she was chosen to lure Rasputin to his murder.) The best-loved star of all was Vera Kholodnaia, the wife of a poor officer, who had studied at the Bolshoi ballet school. With her dyed black hair, pale face and green eyes ('My eyes are my fortune,' she said), she passed into legend in 1919 when she died in Odessa, of Spanish flu, aged 26.

Russian films of 1913-17 can come as something of a shock to those accustomed to American cinema of the period. There is for a start their apparent pessimism. Audiences liked sad endings. When he remade Griffith's *The Lonely Villa*, Protazanov changed the story so that the husband failed to reach home in time to save his wife. Frequently the Russian film factories made two versions of a story, with a happy ending for export.

Yuri Tsivian explains in the Pordenone catalogue: "Russian endings" came into the cinema from nineteenth-century Russian theatrical melodrama, which always ended badly. Unlike the

The Accession of the House of Romanov (Goncharov, 1913)



Stenka Razin (1908), the first Russian dramatic film.



Western theatrical melodrama, the Russian variant derives from classical tragedy adapted to the level of mass consciousness. . .the peculiarity of Russian cinema and of Russian mass culture is its constant attempt to emulate the forms of high art' (*Silent Witnesses/ Testimoni Silenziosi: Russian Films 1908-1919*, Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine/BFI Publishing).

The other peculiarity is the conscious rejection of American-style montage. The Russian preference was to shoot a scene wherever possible in a single shot—to cut within a scene was even a mark of incompetence. The Russian style depended rather on *mise en scène*, on decor and above all on performance. Influenced both by the Stanislavski method and Scandinavian cinema, Russian film acting sought to express feelings and psychology rather than action. American acting appeared to Russians 'fidgety'.

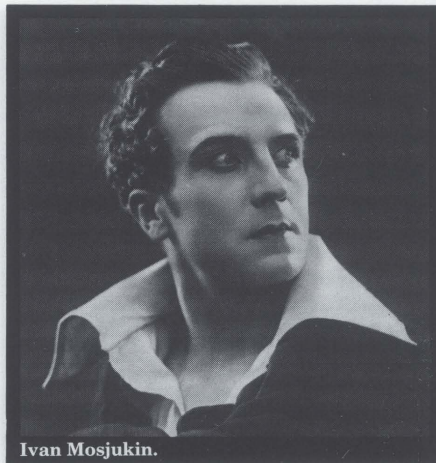
The ideal was to give the actor 'the opportunity to depict in stage terms a specific spiritual experience, no matter how many metres it takes.' Protazanov would direct an actor's expression with a baton and an instruction to 'Pause!' In 1925, André Levinson recalled, 'The Russian product was preoccupied with feeling, with the vibration of the atmosphere surrounding motionless figures. The relationship between black and white, the concepts of chiaroscuro, served expressiveness better than an occasional gesture by the characters.'

It was in this aesthetic context, and in the transitional year of 1913, that Evgeni Frantsevich Bauer entered the Russian cinema. Forgotten for seventy years, Bauer must now be perceived as the most singular artist of the period and a key influence on the later development of Soviet cinema, particularly through two of his most devoted disciples, Ivan Perestiani and Lev Kuleshov.

Bauer's own film career is all the more remarkable since it lasted no more than four years, during which he made some eighty films—of which rather more than a quarter have survived. Bauer was already 48 when he made his

first film. His father was a famous performer on the zither; and his sisters were actresses. Bauer himself graduated from the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, and worked at various times as an amateur actor, caricaturist, satirical journalist, theatrical impresario and artistic photographer. He was best known, however, as a theatre designer. He seems to have moved in the most cultivated circles, since he was able to persuade Nemirovich-Danchenko, Briusov, Leonid Andreyev and Ippolitov-Ivanov, along with other Moscow cultural lions, to make guest appearances in *Puppets of Fate* (1917).

His first encounter with the cinema



Ivan Mosjukin.

was as scenic designer of Drankov and Taldykin's *Tercentenary of the Rule of the Romanov Dynasty*. This was a curious assignment. The censorship rule forbade the dramatic representation of Tsars after Alexander I. Consequently, while the early scenes of Romanov history were fully staged (albeit in numbingly static and over-costumed tableaux), the nineteenth-century Tsars were portrayed by marble busts, surrounded by drapery and elegantly grouped actors representing notables of their day. In the final part of the film, Nikolai II was represented by actuality film of the spectacular Tercentenary celebrations. It is regretfully to be assumed that Bauer was responsible for the bust tableaux, done in the worst

style of studio photographs of the day.

Nevertheless, he was obviously encouraged to direct by Drankov and Taldykin, for whom he made four films, characterised by their titles—*Secret of the Portrait of Professor Insarov*, *The Fearful Place of Hunchback K.*, *Criminal Passion* and *The Cupboard of Death*. He then defected to Khanzonkov and Pathé's Star Film Factory, where he also made four films, including his first surviving work, *Twilight of a Woman's Soul*.

In this film the Bauer world and style appear fully formed, along with his predilection for dreams and theatre scenes. The story tells how Vera, a young noblewoman, irked by her unproductive life, determines to devote herself to the needy. One of her beneficiaries, a brutishly handsome worker, begins to figure in her dreams. When she returns to his hovel, he rapes her; and she stabs him to death. The murdered man continues to haunt her dreams. She confesses the crime to her fiancé, a Prince. He spurns her and Vera disappears. When the Prince sees her again she is an opera star, singing *La Traviata*. He attempts reconciliation, but it is tragically too late.

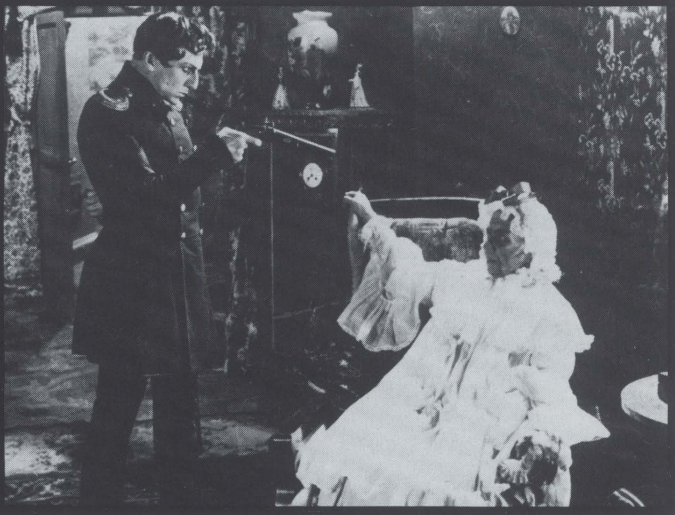
More remarkable than the erotic and social overtones of the story is the visual style. The second shot is a *mise en scène* such as only Bauer could devise. Gauzy curtains divide the depth of the scene into planes, in which glamorous figures flit about. The foreground is framed with strongly silhouetted draperies and vases of flowers. The realistic slum scenes, both exterior and interior, are in sharp contrast. In one striking shot, the worker, in his subterranean room, watches the legs and feet of his aristocratic benefactors as they pass the window.

At both Drankov and Taldykin and the Star Factory, Bauer's cameraman was Nikolai Kozlovski (who had shot *Stenka Razin*). Early in 1914, he moved to the main Khanzonkov Studio and began a collaboration with the cameraman Boris Zaveliev which lasted to the end of Bauer's career. It is valuable to be able to compare films shot by the two cameramen and Bauer's few films with

Protazanov's *Satan Triumphant*: Mosjukin and Lissenko.



The Queen of Spades (1910), directed by Chardynin.



other photographers: the consistency of visual style clearly establishes that it was imposed by Bauer himself.

His visual sense was not only innovative: it remains unique and instantly recognisable. He cleared the clutter of furnishings that had been the mark of high-class cinema; and though he was limited by the resources of the Khanzonkov property-room (the same furniture and ornaments recur from film to film, as do the cut-glass panelled doors of the Khanzonkov offices), his 'Liberty'-influenced decorative manner is distinctive. He used the depth of the screen imaginatively, and employed gauzes and curtains to change its volume and proportions. In *Child of the Big City*, a curtain drawn three parts of the way across the screen divides the screen space into two distinct acting areas.

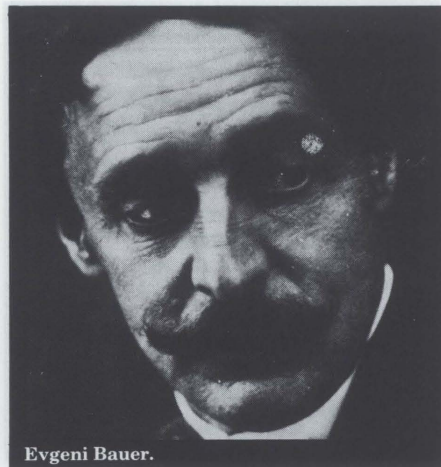
Bauer used lighting pictorially—he was a pioneer of backlighting his actors—but also with a strong sense of drama. Protazanov wrote: 'Bauer had a gift for using light. His scenery was alive, mixing the monumental with the intimate. Next to a massive and heavy column—a transparent web of tulle sheeting—the light plays over a brocade coverlet under the dark arches of a low flat, over flowers, furs, crystal. A beam of light in his hands was an artist's brush.'

Bauer was clearly the star director of the Khanzonkov Studio, of which he became one of the main shareholders, and earned the phenomenal salary of 40,000 roubles. His output, considering the polish of his films, most of which ran for one hour or more, was astonishing. In 1914, he made 20 films; in 1915, 20 again; in 1916, 25. The release dates do not necessarily give a reliable indication either of the precise order of production or the time taken in production. Yet it may be significant that while lesser films show intervals of less than a week between releases, there was a 42-day gap between the release of the preceding Bauer film and *Twilight of a Woman's Soul*; and a 41-day interval preceding the release of another 1914 masterpiece, *Child of the Big City*.

Throughout the early part of 1914, Bauer's subjects, though melodramatic

in plot, were predominantly realistic and socially slanted in subject. *Child of the Big City* tells how a young woman, orphaned at birth and raised to work in a sweat-shop, escapes her miserable life by becoming mistress of a rich young man, whom she promptly ruins and abandons. The film ends with the footman turning him away from the door of her grand mansion. He shoots himself on the steps; the heroine steps over the body with a cry of 'Off to Maxim's'.

The remarkable *Silent Witnesses* (scripted by Alexander Vosnesenski) is set between the upstairs and downstairs of an aristocratic mansion, where a maid is betrayed by the weak-willed young son of the house. The heroine's



Evgeni Bauer.

stoical father, the hall porter, is startlingly like Emil Jannings in *The Last Laugh*. Bauer made several short farces, of which the most praised was a satire on the sports craze, *Ideal Young Men of the Day*.

In August war broke out, and the studios braced themselves to patriotism. Bauer instantly made *Secret of the German Embassy*; and in November turned out two war subjects (*Glory to Us*, *Death to the Enemy*, a hastily run-up affair with Mosjugin; *A Son of His Country*), alongside three farces and a drama.

Five days before Germany declared war on Russia, however, Khanzonkov released *Life in Death*, a film indicative of the future direction of Bauer's career as well as of the Russian cinema. The

cinema, like its audience, was to come deeply under the influence of the 'Decadence' of the fashionable Symbolist artists, particularly the writers Valeri Briusov, Alexander Blok and Fedor Sologub, all of whose works—full of mysticism and necrophilia—were to be adapted for the cinema. In *Life in Death*, from a story by Briusov, Mosjugin played a man so infatuated with his wife's beauty that he kills her and keeps her body embalmed for eternity in the cellar. This was quickly followed by *The Evil Night*, which told how a young man discovers the reason for his bride's suicide, and kills her seducer, his own best friend, on the dead girl's grave.

There is no reason to suppose that this decadent, morbid, necrophiliac strain—which for some who encountered Bauer's work at Pordenone was its dominant and alienating impression—reflected his personal character. It was, however, what the public wanted—escapism on the one hand, on the other perhaps a reflection of the demoralisation of the war and the final years of the monarchy. Bauer alternated the genre with realist social melodramas and with farces, several of which aimed to establish his vivacious wife as a character comedienne, 'Lina'.

Among his 1915 releases, *Leon Drey* and *Children of the Age* are realist, social melodramas. Adapted from a novel by the Jewish writer Semeon Yushkevich, *Leon Drey* is the story of an arriviste using his sexual appeal to escape from his modest background. (Mosjugin, incidentally, left the Khanzonkov company out of hurt pride when the title role went to Nikolai Radin.) *Children of the Age*—one of five films in which Bauer subtly used the great beauty and restricted dramatic range of Vera Kholodnaia—was a sardonic story of a bank clerk whose wife is the victim of the boss' sexual intentions.

Concurrently he created two of the most quintessential 'Decadent' and necrophiliac pictures. *Daydreams* begins with the deathbed of a young wife. Later, the devastated husband sees in the street a woman who reminds him of

Vera Coralli in Bauer's *The Dying Swan* (1917).



Yuri Nagorni (Bauer, 1916): Emma Bauer on stage.



her. He follows her to the Opera, where he watches her on stage playing a ghost in *Robert the Devil*. After he marries her, the woman proves a vulgar shrew, jealous to find herself a surrogate for the dead wife. When she desecrates the loved one's memory, the husband strangles her with the holiest relic, the wife's braids.

After Death, an adaptation of Turgeniev's *Klara Milich*, concerns a man haunted and fascinated by the ghost of a beautiful woman whom he had barely met before her suicide. Technically, this is one of Bauer's most striking films. In an early scene, a tracking camera moves, start and stop, through a crowded reception, halting at individual groups and finally bringing the hero (Vitold Polonski) face to face with the girl, with the camera moving in to a huge close-up of Vera Coralli's mesmeric eyes. Later, a purposely over-exposed shot of the apparition in a cornfield is worthy of Dreyer's *Vampyr*.

An incident related to *After Death* sheds attractive light on Bauer's personality. He forwarded to a film magazine a letter from a lady who complained that the film was unfaithful to Turgeniev. Bauer asked that the complaint should be published, together with his reply, in which he wholly agreed with his correspondent: 'It is our view that the cinema has still not found the movements and pace required to embody Turgeniev's delicate poetry. Nor, alas, will it find them soon, since film directors have been educated in conditions allowing them to take barbarous liberties with the authors. Since, in the initial phase of their career, they are involved merely with works that are hopeless from the literary point of view, they grow accustomed to doing as they wish, to altering arbitrarily the intentions, the situations and even the heroes invented by the author.'

Happiness of Eternal Night lies between the 'Decadent' films and the romantic-realist melodramas. A young man arranges the cure of a blind girl. Unfortunately, the first person she sees is his caddish brother, with whom she instantly falls in love, supposing him to

be her benefactor. The shock of learning the truth, and the perfidy of the bad brother, causes her relapse into permanent blindness.

Not much of Bauer's 1916 production survives, though it includes *A Life for a Life*, the most opulent of his *mises en scène* ('Columns, columns and more columns,' wrote a contemporary reviewer). Yuri Nagorni anticipates *Phantom of the Opera*: a woman avenges her sister, seduced by an opera star, by arranging a fire in which his face is horribly disfigured. *Nellie Raintseva* tackled a more interesting subject—a young bourgeois woman desperate to find a role in society—but the fragment that survives suggests that the contribution



Natalia Lissenko, Mosjukin's wife.

of the writer Amfiteatrof bogged it down in intertitles.

In January and February 1917, four Bauer films were released, including *The Dying Swan*, in which Vera Coralli meets her death at the hands of an adoring artist for whom the only perfection is death—an archetypal figure of the Symbolist-Decadent era.

The February Revolution and the Provisional Government of Kerensky swept away the restrictive Tsarist censorship—which needs to be examined as a prime cause of the escapism often charged against Russian cinema by left-wing critics—and ushered in a period of *glasnost*. There was a rush of anti-Romanov films whose titles (*Secrets of the Okhraina*, *Nightmares*

from the Past) rarely manage to justify themselves.

Bauer, however, made two post-Revolution films that suggest he might have become a major director of the Soviet period. In *The Revolutionary*, Perestiani plays a Communist arrested in 1907 and sent to Siberia (effectively filmed on location in Moscow's Petrovsky Park). He returns after February 1917 to a reunion with his son, now grown up and politically engaged. *Nabat (The Alarm Bell)* was the most ambitious film of the period between February and October 1917, a series of parallel dramas (the only time Bauer used a Griffithian structure) about the political, social and industrial upheavals of the end of the Tsarist era.

In the spring of 1917, Bauer went to the Crimea to plan a new studio for Khanzonkov, who for health reasons wanted to move South. He fell on the shore and broke his leg. Complications led to pneumonia: he died on 9 June 1917. Two last films were completed posthumously. The beautiful *To Happiness*, directed from his hospital bed, is the story of a frail young girl who falls in love with her mother's lover, and succumbs to blindness when he rejects her. The melodrama was redeemed by technical invention and the appearance, as a not very good actor, of the film's young art director Lev Kuleshov. *The King of Paris* was finished by one of Bauer's favourite character actresses, Olga Rakhmanova, who was launched as Russia's first woman director.

A reviewer of *King of Paris* wrote with strange prescience, 'Bauer is dead, but . . . many years in the future some cinema writer will extract his frayed films from the archives and use them to study closely the Bauer era of cinema, the mystery of his pictures' charm and the secret of their success with the public.'

A season of early Russian films, including most of those exhibited at Pordenone, will be shown at the National Film Theatre in February. The films will be introduced by the BFI Fellow Yuri Tsivian.

The Revolutionary (Bauer, 1917): Ivan Perestiani (right).



Silent Witnesses (Bauer, 1914): Alexander Kheruvimov.





The Needle.

Kazakhstan Wave

FORREST S. CIESOL

Everyone loves a good 'wave' in film-making. It invariably distracts us from the otherwise tenuous state of world cinema. It is unlikely, however, that even the most forward-looking among us would have predicted that the next wave would be from Soviet Kazakhstan. But in Alma-Ata, the Soviet republic capital furthest from Moscow, all the essential elements are developing: a low-budget first film directed by a student becomes a box-office smash across the USSR . . . three quirky low-budget first features by students under 35 years old await release . . . three first features by young directors and a dramatic short by a 23-year-old director are currently in production. Add domestic critical acclaim, a stack of international festival invitations and planned retrospectives, and the conclusion is inescapable: Kazakhstan is the next new wave.

About 300 kilometres west of the

Chinese border, the spacious grounds of the bustling Kazakhfilm Studios are like a small college campus. About 1,200 people work there. Most are startlingly young, in their twenties or early thirties. Clearly, the status quo has been turned upside down. The older generation of Kazakh film-makers—privileged and comfortably established during the Brezhnev era—look on in disbelief as the emphasis and power in their republic's film-making shifts abruptly to the young.

The Kazakhfilm Studios are the best equipped in the Soviet Central Asian republics, even boasting British and Japanese sound equipment and large-screen video projection. Kazakhfilm produces four feature films a year, in addition to four dramatic shorts, four to six animated shorts and about thirty short documentaries. Production is divided into two units. The 'Miras'

(heritage) unit is for more traditional, specifically Kazakh films. 'Alem' (universe) is the home of the new wave for modern, internationally oriented films.

In one respect, this new wave was engineered. In 1984, a special five-year class designed to train professional film-makers for the Kazakhfilm Studios was instituted at the Moscow Film School. Professor and director Sergei Solovyov (*The Wild Pigeon*, *Assa*, *Black Rose of Sadness*, *Red Rose of Love*) was responsible for its orchestration. The class produced seven directors, three screenwriters, two cinematographers and two art directors. All the students were employed in film production at Kazakhfilm long before their graduation. Add to these a handful of talented film-makers of similar education and age, and the raw materials were in place. The creativity of this group, however, could not have been foreseen.

The success of 35-year-old Rachid Nugmanov's low-budget *The Needle*, the first feature by one of Solovyov's students, has done much to open doors for the young film-makers. In this hip, dreamy, sleepwalk-thriller, Moro returns to Alma-Ata to collect a debt and discovers that his former girlfriend has become a junkie. In trying to save her, he finds himself up against the local drug mafia headed by a corrupt doctor.

A refreshingly inventive thriller that alternately burlesques, rejects and embraces genre conventions, *The Needle* was granted 'first category' distribution status by Goskino, meaning that more than 1,000 prints were distributed throughout the USSR. The film was released in January 1989, and despite its 'R' rating (prohibited for those under 16), it was seen by more than 9 million people in the first three months of its release. The film received a great deal of attention in the Soviet press; *Isskustvo Kino* called it 'the best Soviet film released in the first six months of 1989.'

Early in 1989, on the heels of this success, Rachid Nugmanov was elected chief of the Alem unit. The power of the young film-makers was further consolidated by his surprise election as First Secretary of the Union of Kazakh Film-makers last April. The young film-makers rallied support for Nugmanov more as a formal protest against the old regime than as a serious political manoeuvre. No one was more surprised by his election than Nugmanov himself, who claims, 'It was as if everyone forgot I was still a student.' The election of a student as First Secretary is unprecedented in the history of Soviet creative unions.

To their credit, the young Kazakh film-makers have not seized on *glasnost* to make the same kind of films that have been spewing forth from the large Russian studios—shocking documentary exposés, films about Stalin, or ponderous and largely incomprehensible avant-garde narratives. The diversity of subject matter is by far the biggest surprise about the films now being made.

Three super low-budget first films—unpolished, but still of great interest—are now awaiting release: *Little Fish in Love*, *The Three* and *The Last Stop*. In Serik Aprimov's *The Last Stop*, a young man returns from the Army to his native Aksuat, a decrepit village on the desolate Kazakh plains. In seemingly random episodes, village life is presented with unvarnished documentary realism. Fragments range from a woman being berated for stopping to talk while repairing an adobe building to a drunken man firing on police from a rooftop. With little concern for unity of narrative, the naturalism of these scenes is so startling that it borders on surrealism.

Aprimov is a native of Aksuat and his cast is made up entirely of non-professionals—his friends, relatives and neighbours. Even before the film was finished, villagers telephoned com-



The Fall of Otrar.

plaints to the studio about the way their lives were being portrayed. One more serious complaint recently was filed by the Aksuat district Communist Party, which voiced vague but serious objections in a letter addressed to the Central Committee of the Kazakh Communist Party, the Kazakh Republic Cultural Committee and the Director of the Kazakhfilm Studio.

The letter stated: '... Serik Aprimov distorted the rural reality and peoples' lifestyle, painting everything in black. He deliberately took pictures of old houses that are falling apart. At the present time we have begun to replace them with new houses. If one would tour our entire republic and look in all corners of the regions, districts and cities, one would probably see similar collapsing houses.' Signed by eleven heroes of Socialist Labour, the letter praised the economic, social, and cultural achievements of the region at length, yet conceded, 'Of course, we have many unsolved problems and therefore our district is one of the 34 most underdeveloped districts in the republic.'

A furious Aprimov is quick to point out that the objections were based not on an actual viewing, but a newspaper review. Though passionately fighting the criticism, Aprimov believes that even in the current era of *glasnost*, district officials could stop the release of the film. Or they could exert enough influence to have it released in the 'fourth category' of distribution, effectively burying it. Undoubtedly, Aprimov will triumph. It is now more dangerous

to try to stop the release of a film than to make a controversial one.

Reminiscent of early Wim Wenders, Abai Karpikov's *Little Fish in Love* is a cool, stylish road movie about a young man who comes to Alma-Ata looking for love and, for a few days, weaves in and out of the lives of several characters including a stunningly beautiful woman married to a government official. While he clearly lacks Wenders' sense of character, Karpikov nevertheless succeeds in creating the sleek, minimalist atmosphere of a city that some residents claim has 'fallen into a deep sleep, dreaming of better times.'

A tragi-comic morality play about three tramps (*bichi* in Russian, an acronym for former intelligent person), *The Three* reveals that Soviet society, like any other, has its extreme marginal citizens. The first film of Bakhyt Kilibaev and Alexander Baranov is a study in degradation, of people completely alienated from the Soviet system and society, yet who maintain a curious dignity, even while drinking wood polish to get high. When the values of these dropouts are compared to those of the smug, successful film crew they encounter, material success appears unattractive.

Still to be released, *The Three* was funded by the Kazakh Cultural Ministry as a first short film. After receiving the money, however, Kilibaev and Baranov decided instead to make a feature with the same tiny budget. The film is owned by the Alem unit and not the State Committee for Cinematography (Goskino), as is the norm. The

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The Three.

unit plans to attempt to distribute the film itself by creating an alternative to Goskino's distribution monopoly. Now, that's *perestroika*. Meanwhile, Kilibaev is directing *Klish*, a slick urban thriller, and Baranov is shooting *He and She*, a love story.

Ardak Amirkulov's *The Fall of Otrar*, the saga of a city in Kazakhstan destroyed by Genghis Khan after a six-month siege during the thirteenth century, is the most eagerly awaited of the films now in production at the Studios. Written by Svetlana Karmalita and Alexi Gherman (*Trial on the Road*, *My Friend Ivan Lapshin*), the film is an allegory of the political climate in Russia just before Hitler's invasion of 1941. The fact that Gherman has entrusted his script to a student and first-time director speaks highly of Amirkulov. The ambitious three-hour epic will be completed in the autumn of 1990. Footage shot to date promises a superbly crafted film.

Naana Chankova is currently in production on *The Full Moon*, which she mischievously sums up as 'a contemporary love story full of strange occurrences and possibly witchcraft.' Chankova is Hakhasian, a nationality from the Altai mountains of Kazakhstan and Siberia. Her short fiction film *Not Before I Tread on the Soft Grass* recounts a young Hakhasian woman's memories of her father, as she travels to his funeral. While revelling in the rich folklore of the Hakhasian people, the film plainly alludes to Stalin's oppression of minority groups.

As First Secretary of the Union of Kazakh Film-makers, Nugmanov is travelling to many international festivals, overseeing renovation of the Union headquarters and construction of a new building, and managing the affairs of the 300-plus member union. He still finds time, however, for his own work and is in pre-production on his second feature, *Citadel of Death*. This story of unprovoked violence and 'a few struggling against many' will be shot in Leningrad during the coming year.

Talgat Temenov recently completed his first feature, a children's film, *Wolf*

Cub Among People, which chronicles the friendship between two outcasts, a boy and a wolf cub. Though it was financed through Mosfilm, all production was done at Kazakhfilm Studios. Temenov was invited to make this feature for Mosfilm on the strength of his previous short films, most notably *Toro*, which is destined to become a classic of Kazakh cinema. Owing a heavy debt to Italian neo-realism, it tells the story of a boy who knuckles under to the pressure of his playmates and, at great peril, steals money from his cruel stepfather to bet on their soccer game. Delightfully acted by an almost all-child cast, the film is edited for maximum tension. The hero's salvation is a matter of split-second timing.

Another recent short film that borrows from neo-realism is Derezhan Omirbaev's *Summer Heat*, the story of two young boys who are tricked by fate while trying to make enough money to see an Indian melodrama one last time. Splendidly photographed in black and white, the film captures the vastness and isolation of the Kazakh steppe, as well as the odd rhythms of life in this remote village.

Unusual excitement surrounded the production of the recently completed *Three Thousand Years*, a 20-minute sepia-toned black and white film by 23-year-old Amir Karakulov. At a screening of a work print, a studio receptionist proudly proclaimed: 'This young man is a cinema poet.' Colleagues expect much of Karakulov.

The Kazakh new wave is gaining momentum. The Studio normally produces four features a year. Under pressure from the film-makers and indisputable success at the box office, that number is likely to double. With big potential grosses for low-budget films such as *The Needle*, even Soviet banks are now eager to finance the young film-makers. But such business relationships have only recently become possible, and are still in their infancy. Radical structural change may still be a distant reality, but it is these aggressive young film-makers who could help to bring it about. ■

Something for which the London Film Festival is often given insufficient credit is its ability to pick up changes in the wind, to sense new departures and new areas of concern. Sometimes these are linked to political developments, sometimes they are purely aesthetic, sometimes a bit of both. It is not always the best films in the festival that in the long run prove the most important. Some films for which it may be hard to make a good case in terms of their intrinsic merits nevertheless seem to point the way to better things to come.

This was certainly true of the 1989 festival, which could be seen not so much as the end of a decade as the herald of what may prove fruitful lines of development in the 90s. One theme that occurred in film after film—from Britain, from Brazil, from America and even from Switzerland—was what it means to be black in a white world. The theme was tackled, it has to be said, with varying degrees of success, but the reasons why some of these films failed are instructive in themselves.

No less extraordinary is the ferment of change taking place within Russia and what used to be confidently called the communist bloc. Elem Klimov and his colleagues at the Soviet Film-makers' Union always maintained that it would be a few years after the vaults were cleared before we would see the

spirit of *glasnost* in new Russian movies. That moment seems now to have come as Russian movies rediscover a sense of self-mockery that has been too long suppressed, while the satellites and other communist countries come to terms in very different ways with the challenge of democracy.

The third thread running through the 1989 LFF was the strength of the Australian contingent. Peter Weir and Bruce Beresford may these days be thought of more as Hollywood than Australian directors, but that first wave

of antipodean talent has been succeeded by another, even more promising one. Some of the most original work in the festival came from Australian film-makers such as Bill Bennett, Jane Campion and first-timer Ann Turner.

The film that most clearly epitomises the black struggle for self-expression is Euzhan Palcy's *A Dry White Season*, adapted from the 1979 novel by André Brink. Black, born in Martinique and the director six years ago of *Rue Cases Nègres*, Ms Palcy brings to this story of the brutal workings of apartheid in South Africa in 1976 a special empathy that even Richard Attenborough in *Cry Freedom* could not be expected to contribute. Yet, oddly, her film mirrors Attenborough's in certain respects and has weaknesses that he was able to avoid. Perhaps it's a matter of the source material: Attenborough, after all, had a true tale to tell, Ms

Palcy did not and had to think of the dramatic impact.

A Dry White Season resembles *Cry Freedom* in being the story of a white man's education to the obscenities of apartheid. The two films even open in a similar way, with pointed cross-cutting between the 'haves' of Johannesburg's northern suburbs and the 'have-nots' of the African townships. Where Ms Palcy's film begins to falter, however, is in the increasing strain of melodrama in the plot. Jurgan Prochnow's sadistic police chief never rings wholly true

Alain Tanner's *The Woman from Rose Hill*.



David Mingay and David Robinson's *Sophisticated Lady*.



because Ms Palty does not allow us to see another side to his character. That's a mistake Chris Menges and David Suchet never made in *A World Apart*. And the end, with Donald Sutherland murdered and real-life black South African exile Zakes Mokae executing the killer with a pistol, smacks of commercialism. It is there because audiences like to leave the cinema with a sense of justice done. But how, in ultravigilant, repressive South Africa would a native have had access to a gun? *A Dry White Season* proves once more that good intentions are not enough—not even when you also have Marlon Brando back on top form as a caustic liberal barrister.

The LFF's second film directly about apartheid, *A Private Life*, was the first of the BBC's ventures into feature production designed initially for theatrical release. Set in Cape Town from 1950 onwards, it is based on the true story of an ex-South African policeman forced to live a clandestine existence across the colour bar because the woman he loves has been categorised as Coloured.

Francis Gerard's film has two principal flaws. First, it feels too much like a tv drama, with close-ups and narrow angles that betray the director's long years in tv documentaries and other series—*A Private Life* looks as if it belongs in your living room. Second and more disturbing, the story seems to be constructed round what is regarded as an error of classification. None of this family's distress, the film seems to be saying, need have happened if a white woman had not been mis-classified as Coloured. But this puts the assault on apartheid on the wrong foot. The system is not evil because it leads to tragic mistakes, it is evil *tout court*.

Another film in the festival to tackle racial prejudice is Alain Tanner's *The*

Woman from Rose Hill. Set in a wintry, snowy Switzerland, it looks beyond the country's tourist attractions to depict a narrow, bigoted, parochial society in which black women are imported as skivvies and sex objects, with the dubious privilege of a marriage certificate and right of abode as their reward.

What scuppers the story, however, is Tanner's screenplay. Like Euzhan Palty's script for *A Dry White Season*, it turns on an improbability—that one member of a family would recklessly contribute to the death of a close relative for the sake of preserving racial solidarity. It just doesn't wash and leads to the unfortunate impression that the writer-director is manipulating the story to make a point, even if the motives are beyond reproach.

It's a relief to turn from these melodramatised stories about 'blackness' to the real thing—the way black people have in fact carved out a role for themselves in a white-dominated society. *Ori* is not an elegant film. It is a documentary shot over a period of about seven years charting the way black Brazilians have re-created their African origins in the new world through the concept of the *quilombos* (warrior establishments and initiation ceremonies) reincarnated in the tradition of the samba schools. If one can criticise Raquel Gerber's film it must be because at an hour and a half it is too short. The longer tv version may, perhaps, seem less like preaching to the converted. *Ori* means 'head'—black consciousness in relation to time, history and memory. A virtue of this film is that it does not purport to tell you all you need to know but encourages you to find out more.

Sophisticated Lady is film critic David Robinson's third documentary about a legendary showbiz entertainer and the second to focus on a black woman. This

time his co-director is David Mingay but it is very much a David Robinson project. In *Sophisticated Lady* the subject is Adelaide Hall, who made her debut in 1921, is now 87 years old and still singing like a trouser. The film is a fascinating companion piece to *Keeping Love Alive*, the similar movie Robinson made two years ago about Elisabeth Welch. Hall and Welch, both black, could not be more temperamentally different. Though both are consummate artists, who can make audiences eat out of their hands, Adelaide Hall is manifestly the more extrovert of the two—a jolly and delightful lady, who can take a neglected number like 'The Streets of London' and make you think it's the best song about the capital ever written. Still beautiful in old age, she exudes faith and optimism; Elisabeth Welch, more introverted and perhaps deeper thinking, is the perfect complement.

Of the Australian films in the LFF,

Raquel Gerber's *Ori*.

Karen Shakhnazarov's *Zero City*.



none is more powerful than Bill Bennett's *Malpractice*. The story of a pregnancy that goes wrong thanks to the inexperience of a hospital registrar, it is shot with hand-held cameras and a degree of improvisation as if the events it depicts were actually happening. Not the least remarkable feature is the way the film implies that the camera is in the thick of the crisis, catching telling details here, picking up revealing glances there.

It is a tour de force, matched in the second half by the increasingly sinister process by which the medical profession closes ranks against any suggestion of professional misjudgment. A sobering piece that amply fulfils the promise of *Backlash*, *Malpractice* marks Bill Bennett as one of the most gifted of the younger generation of Australian filmmakers.

Jane Campion's *Sweetie* is not to everyone's taste, yet to those on its maverick wavelength it catches much of the spirit of the films of Mike Leigh. Its cast of characters consists almost entirely of no-hopers and, as with Mike Leigh, much of the impact resides in the unease audiences feel in the face of the truly odd and subnormal. Shot in an almost expressionistic style, *Sweetie* dares us to laugh at this sad spectacle of mental and social inadequacy. It brings us uncomfortably face to face with our own shortcomings and in the last scene modulates brilliantly from farce to tragedy in short order.

Celia, by a new director, Ann Turner, is scarcely less effective in alternating the moods of a story that starts like Walt Disney and ends like *The Bad Seed*. Celia is a little girl with an overripe imagination for whom the Hobyahs, creatures she reads about in her storybook, and the ghost of her recently dead granny are just as real as

the Dick Barton figure she sees at the local movies. When her pet rabbit becomes the victim of a state policy aimed at eradicating vermin, she begins to question whether anyone who implements such a programme deserves to live... Darting skilfully between reality and fantasy, Ann Turner's film builds towards a terrifying final sequence in which this nine-year-old murderess tries her hand at an impromptu hanging.

From Russia came two particularly piquant comedies. Karen Shakhnazarov's *Zero City* begins like any other Soviet sleeping pill with the arrival of an engineer to check the efficiency of a factory supplying central-heating components. Soon, however, surrealism supervenes: the managing director's secretary is nonchalantly typing invoices in her birthday suit, while deep in the bowels of the basement there's a museum with a monument to every ism in postwar Soviet history, and in the almost deserted restaurant the cook threatens suicide unless the visitor partakes of his special mousse shaped in the mould of the diner's features. Shakhnazarov, the director of five feature films, plays it all dead straight and poker-faced as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Less successful as comedy but symbolically farther reaching is Yuri Mamin's first film, *Fountain*. It centres on a block of flats riven by an appalling crack in the wall and in danger of imminent collapse. As the walls shift on their foundations a huge hole opens in the roof, yet nowhere can metal sheets or rafters be found to effect even a temporary repair. On one level a satire on the material shortages endemic in the Soviet system, the film is also by implication a critique of the system itself. The rickety building, patched and

shored up endlessly when it should be allowed to fall to the ground, can, without too much imagination, be read as a symbol of the state itself. This is Russian cinema in a more daring mood than at any time since the Thaw.

As Russia and the satellite film industries are opening up, taking risks again, the dead hand of repression has been reapplied in China. All requests to Beijing to show one of the last of the fifth-generation movies, *Evening Bell*, were ignored. Yet the LFF did manage to field one Chinese movie, because a print happened to be in the country. This was *Young Couples*, directed by Zheng Dongtian, head of the direction department at the Beijing Film Academy and the man responsible for teaching the fifth-generation film-makers.

Set in a block of flats allocated to favoured newly-weds, it tells six self-contained stories linked by bridging shots of a lift stopping at the various floors on which they live and alarm clocks to mark the time of day. The tone is modern, the consumer goods more plentiful than the average Chinese couple would enjoy. These are the elite of a society that nominally rejects elitism. The stories are sharp, funny and touching—a bickering couple who nevertheless act as matchmakers for their colleague, a virginal wife in need of sex manuals and videos to teach her about the birds and the bees, a working woman who cooks a banquet at short notice for her husband's friends and is left with a mountain of washing-up at the end of the evening. This is *Menschen am Sonntag* revisited—wise, witty and with many pertinent things to say about Chinese hyper-inflation. We should cherish this film now; it is not only a winner in its own right but we shall not, in a hurry, see its like again. ■

Yuri Mamin's *Fountain*.



Zheng Dongtian's *Young Couples*.



VIETNAM'S AGONY CASUALTIES OF WAR

For American moviemakers, as, perhaps, for most Americans, the war in Vietnam has signified an almost unimaginable chaos: a moral swamp, a jungle of ambiguity, an acid-rock inferno, a purple haze in which nothing can be seen clearly. To watch the war on the nightly news in the late 60s was to experience it as a nightmare or a bad trip—there was never enough context to allow us to interpret the horrors before our eyes—and that, for the most part, is the Vietnam the movies have given back to us: the war that took place inside our stunned minds, the one that wasn't so much about Vietnam as about us.

Looking at *Apocalypse Now* or *The Deer Hunter* or *Full Metal Jacket*, you'd think that the real obscenity wasn't that a small country was invaded by America, but that America's consciousness was invaded by what it most feared: doubt, self-consciousness, the everyday awareness of mortality. Even Oliver Stone's *Platoon*, less solipsistic than the others, fell back on the egregious notion that the primary conflict was within the souls of Americans.

Brian De Palma's *Casualties of War* (UIP) transcends the chaos. De Palma isn't interested in expressing his shock at the treacherousness of the world: he's known about that for quite some time. *Casualties of War* is the strongest, the simplest and the most painful of all the Vietnam movies because it isn't about how terrible it is not to understand what's going on around us—it's about the agony of seeing terrible things too clearly. The screenplay, by the playwright David Rabe (*The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel*, *Streamers*), is based on an incident reported by Daniel Lang in the *New Yorker* in 1969: the rape and murder of a young Vietnamese woman by the members of a US Army patrol.

What makes the story extraordinary is that we see it through the eyes of the one member of the five-man patrol who refused to participate (and later brought charges against his comrades), an ordinary Midwesterner named Eriksson (Michael J. Fox), who can't believe the evil that's taking place in front of him. The leader of the squad, Meserve (Sean Penn), a tough soldier nearing the end of his tour of duty, is the organiser of the kidnapping: the movie shows us the factors that have driven him to this—the sudden death of a close friend, the denial of a pass and the constant, corrosive unease of living in a treacherous landscape, never knowing where the enemy might be coming from. De Palma, as we might expect, does full justice to the dangerous unpredictability of this environment, but he isn't dazed by it. His vision has a bracing clarity: he never allows us to suspend



Casualties of War: Don Harvey, Michael J. Fox.

our moral judgment, to believe, even for a moment, that disorientation excuses everything.

De Palma doesn't treat Vietnam as if it were a remote, totally alien place, the great exception to all we've learned. It's a landscape he knows well, the ferocious and intricately threatening world for which his thrillers have provided such potent metaphors—a traumatised world, in which unspeakable crimes are played out before helpless witnesses, then replayed endlessly in their dreams. Doubt, self-consciousness and mortality invaded him a long, long time ago. Acknowledging them isn't an issue for De Palma anymore: living with them is.

In a sense, he has been making films about Vietnam his whole life, using a painstaking exploration of the thriller technique as a way of dealing with his fear and outrage. (His thriller and horror movies have always made audiences more uncomfortable than even the most graphic slasher pictures, perhaps because we sense something more urgent and serious in his images than a simple desire to shock.) In *Casualties of War*, he seems to have arrived, finally, at the terrifying source of his sensibility; and his unmistakable style feels not so much simplified as purified. The suspense here is heartfelt and unendurable. It's tragic suspense.

The longest and most brilliant section of the film is its middle hour—from the brutal abduction of the young woman, Oahn (Thuy Thu Le), to her murder—and there are few passages in movies in which terror is so agonisingly sustained. Oahn has no English, but her tears and her struggles and her screams speak directly to us, the sounds of her suffering isolated from the undifferentiated din of the war. Her pain is a constant presence that can't be ignored, or taken for something else, or forgotten

when it's over. It registers, with a piercing clarity, in us as it does in Eriksson. Michael J. Fox's unremarkable, sympathetic face is the ideal screen for her horror to be projected on, and his performance is quietly astonishing: the soldier's anguish is plain and eloquent.

The crime is not more awful because this decent American is seeing it, but it feels more awful because Eriksson's awareness provided a moral (and physical) tension that we couldn't experience so powerfully if we were simply watching a unanimous bunch of madmen. Eriksson is us, saying (as we do in any great suspense sequence), 'This can't be allowed to happen.' And for a few, heart-stopping moments he takes us to the verge of believing that it won't: although he feels trapped by his role as a grunt taking orders (and it's clear that the deranged Meserve wouldn't hesitate to kill him if he stepped too far out of line), he tries, after a good deal of delay and indecision, to take Oahn away from her tormentors. But there's no escape.

Finally, Oahn is killed by the squad in the midst of a hectic skirmish with the enemy, and Eriksson, fighting for his own life, can't save her. De Palma's staging of this climactic sequence, which takes place on a set of railway tracks on the side of a hill, is both a formally stunning bit of action filmmaking and the embodiment of the movie's rigorous morality. All hell is breaking loose, everything's happening at once, yet, in the middle of the chaos, our attention remains—passionately, almost obsessively—on Oahn, who's always somewhere in the frame and always in focus. The fate of this Vietnamese woman is all that matters; she's running towards us along the straight, clear lines of the tracks as she dies.

TERRENCE RAFFERTY

MISSING

PIRAVI

You can almost smell the monsoon that permeates *Piravi* (Contemporary), a first feature by Shaji made with a freshness, sophistication and emotional power that recalls another Indian debut—*Pather Panchali*. As with Ray's work, the magic eludes capture in print. Though not much happens to the characters in *Piravi* (*The Birth*), a whole world is conjured into existence.

The setting is a remote old village in Kerala, the lush coastal state in southwest India that shares with Bengal a tradition of high literacy and Communist government. The period is roughly contemporary, a time of official repression like that of the 1975-77 Emergency. A grizzled old man under an umbrella sits patiently near a riverside waiting for the bus from the state capital. He taps his watch—humidity again—and imagines he hears footsteps. His only son Raghu, who is studying engineering in the city, is expected that day for a family ceremony preparing for his sister's marriage. But he fails to show up.

The disappointed father returns home puzzled on the local ferry, assured by the boatman, who knows the whole family, that all will be well. Unease insinuates itself into the courtyards, passages and verandahs of his ancestral home. His routine is disturbed, and his sick wife and daughter Malathi, a tall, thoughtful beauty, are telepathically alert to the change of mood. The lamps have been lit, as ever, at nightfall, the water in the tank susurrates as the old man rhythmically dips his pot for his evening bath, but where is Raghu, the soul and future of the household?

Slowly but skilfully, and occasionally obscurely, Shaji, former cameraman of G. Aravindan, builds an atmosphere of obsession and suffering around the old

man that can at times stand comparison with Ray's *The Music Room*, a film Shaji says has influenced him, along with the work of Tarkovsky and Bergman. Indelible credit belongs, too, to the 82-year-old Premji, a veteran of the pre-Independence theatre movement making a rare return. Without artifice, he conveys a combination of cantankerousness, naivety and transparent devotion to his offspring, while barely speaking. He belongs to an age that is over, but his humanity lives on in new forms within his daughter and his missing son.

We guess this from something that the voice of the young student tells his sister as she wanders pensively around her brother's empty room—the first of many disembodied reveries of past experience by her and her parents that make sensitively present Raghu's youthful idealism. Look at this ancient building, she hears him say; how its intricate layout is entwined like our two hearts: 'Modernity must be built upon tradition.' That compelling contemporary Indian concern, truly perceived by Shaji, endows *The Birth* with strength and sincerity, and makes it stand proud from the rest of the 'new' Indian cinema that has taken shape since the early 1970s.

Contrasting visions of modernity give a heavy charge to the scenes in the state capital. The old man forces himself to make the journey by ferry and bus in search of his son. Clearly it is his first foray into the urban jungle for many years. He is battered by its noise, speed and tawdry decor, after the luminous green paddy fields and dipping oars of the village. His old haunt, a boarding-house belonging to a priest of the chief temple, still exists; but the Maharaja whose summons he was answering when he used to stay there is long gone.

The petty princelings who rule in his place live in colonial-style offices rather

than palaces. The old man and his entreaty are a nuisance to be brushed off as soon as practical. But since he once helped educate the Home Minister's family, the Minister's conscience feels slightly troubled, especially by the moist gleam he cannot avoid seeing in the eyes of the dogged old tutor. Passing the buck, he sends him to the Inspector General of Police.

This harassed bureaucrat knows very well what has happened to the boy; he was among some students arrested for insolence on the orders of the Home Minister, beaten up, and worse—the IG does not specify. But to the boy's father he claims his son was never arrested, his fears are groundless. 'May God bless you,' replies the shaky old man, wanting to believe, and returns to the village.

Self-delusion is not available to his strong-minded daughter, tenderly played by Archana, a performance all the more remarkable since she is not from Kerala. A classmate of her brother, confronted by her direct appeal outside the village temple, has stammered the truth. Malathi, too, now travels to the city, seeks out her brother's hostel and hears that he may be dead: none of his friends knows for sure. Desperately she asks to see his room.

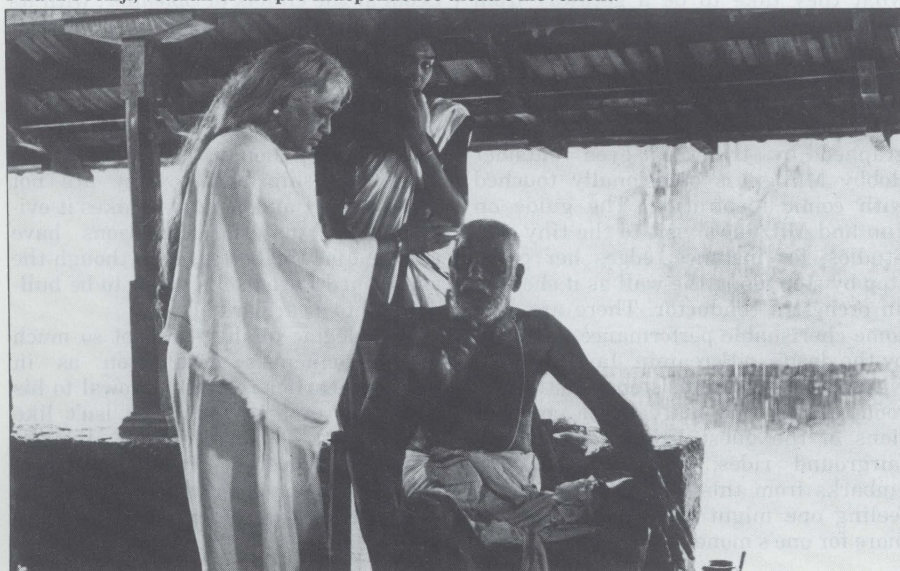
It is an unbearably moving sequence that follows, underscored by the same droning strings that accompanied her communion with Raghu in his room at home, and suffused with almost reverential light streaming through the windows (further evidence, should we need it, of Shaji's painterly instincts). Watched by her brother's silent classmates, she finds first a photograph of her father and then, beneath a textbook, his last, unposted letter: he will be home soon, says Raghu, Father is not to wait at the bus-stop. Malathi finally breaks down.

The news threatens the old man's sanity. Each day he has continued grimly to clamber aboard the ferry and await the bus. Now, under lowering skies, he sits in the boat for the last trip, barely conscious of his surroundings, marooned in a hell of his own. A wistful flute with a note of menace in it hovers over his crossing, replaced, on the way home, by the eerie twanging of a sarod—striking touches in Aravindan's complex score that throughout the film complements Shaji's original, often dissonant use of sound to intensify the characters' mental states.

As the old man steps off the ferry in pouring rain, he flounders in the mud. The boatman, coming to his rescue, sees his boat sliding away in the monsoon current. Torn between his duty as a human and his means of livelihood, he chooses the man, mad though he may be. This inarticulate decision justifies the title of an impressive work of cinema.

ANDREW ROBINSON

Piravi: Premji, veteran of the pre-Independence theatre movement.



SHOT IN THE DARK MYSTERY TRAIN

The two Japanese tourists get down from their train at the start of Jim Jarmusch's new film like self-confident African explorers. They carry a red suitcase on a bamboo pole between them, and the girl, Mitzuko (Youki Kudoh), totes a child's leopard rucksack containing that modern first-aid kit a Walkman and two headsets. They have come from modern Yokohama to flyblown Memphis, Tennessee, to see for themselves the shrines of Graceland and Sun Studios. They are quite without fear, being young; and he, Jun (Masatoshi Nagase), like a latter-day greenhorn gunslinger, is ready to take on all-comers with his quickdraw cigarette lighter.

The tone of this, the first of the three episodes of *Mystery Train* (Palace), is fresh and agreeably playful. Jun, forlorn and resolutely unimpressable, is the quintessence of teenage sophistication: in fact, he knows nothing—the train arrives in Memphis, by his reckoning, two days early—and is wholly dependent on his girlfriend, Mitzuko, on the other hand, is a bubble of enthusiasm, boldly practising her English on the bemused natives and refusing to let Jun's gloom infect her, at one point smooching his face with vivid lipstick in a vain attempt to make him smile.

They spend the night at the Arcade Hotel. The timid bellboy waits and waits for his tip. Mitzuko finally notices him and, rummaging through her treasure-laden suitcase, proudly presents him with some wampum, a Japanese plum. It sits on the reception desk until the by now thoroughly confused boy announces he's not going to eat it, whereupon his resplendent boss (Screamin' Jay Hawkins) pops it into his mouth, with the air of a chameleon swallowing a particularly delicious fly.

What follows is less lively, though it goes down as easily as Mitzuko's plum. An Italian widow, Luisa (Nicoletta Braschi), is stranded in Memphis while waiting for a connecting flight to Rome where she is taking her husband's remains; she also spends the night at the Arcade, sharing a room with a talkative young woman, Dee Dee, who has just split up with her boyfriend. The joke here is that the Italian never mentions her problem. Luisa is visited by the spirit of Elvis (having earlier been duped by Memphis' standard 'ghost of Elvis' tall story); at which point one begins to wonder if whimsy is not in danger of overwhelming the proceedings.

Both episodes end with a pistol shot. 'It's America,' Jun knowingly observes; 'It's a .38,' says Luisa, with what one imagines is more authority. The third episode, the longest and most laboured, reveals the cause of the shot. An Englishman, Johnny (Joe Strummer),



Cinema Paradiso: Salvatore Cascio.
Mystery Train: Screamin' Jay Hawkins.

the man with whom Dee Dee has broken up, a lager lout far from home, shoots the owner of a liquor store and then spends the night, with two nervous companions, holed up at the Arcade.

The weapon goes off a second time during a scuffle as Johnny melodramatically tries to blow his brains out. The three stories then come together, after a fashion, with the Japanese heading by train for New Orleans and the shrine of Fats Domino, Luisa running for her plane and the three low-lives making what they take to be a getaway from the cops and in the process crossing beneath the tracks of the train. Moral: What do we know of the dramas occurring in the next room?

Mystery Train, evocatively photographed by the clear-eyed outsider Robby Müller, is occasionally touched with comic inspiration. The guide on Jun and Mitzuko's visit to the tiny Sun Studios, for instance, edges her party step by step along the wall as if she was an orchestra conductor. There are, too, some cherishable performances, notably by the deadpan Screamin' Jay Hawkins, with his fastidious insistence on the \$22 room charge and his delicate emendations of the guest ledger. Like many fairground rides, however, one disembarks from this one with the slight feeling one might have had just a bit more for one's money.

JOHN PYM

PROJECTED WISDOM CINEMA PARADISO

Giuseppe Tornatore's film is sentimental-romanesque: it begins emblematically with word of a death and a funeral motivating a journey into the past; we then dissolve from present-day Rome, where Salvatore (Jacques Perrin), the middle-aged protagonist, is some undesignated force in the film industry, to the Sicilian village of his birth.

This flashback, beginning during the war, in which the boy's unseen father is killed, centres on the local picture house, around which Salvatore's life revolves, and on its projectionist Alfredo, played by Philippe Noiret in a manner worthy of French prewar character-acting. Alfredo is a surrogate parent; and subsequently, after being blinded in a horrific fire, he places his professional mantle, imbued with magic, on Salvatore's shoulders. Eventually, though, it is Alfredo who persuades Salvatore that he must seek wider horizons.

Cinema Paradiso (Palace) certainly contains a rich collection of archival snippets, but these do not, save perhaps for a couple of early glimpses of title cards to Renoir and Visconti, evoke an aura of self-congratulatory film buffery. Rather, they interact with Tornatore's elaborately detailed creation of a world in which everyday life is enhanced by the folklore of the movies.

Thus, the lottery winner, who will later finance the cinema's rebuilding, reacts to the good news by falling, like a character from René Clair, into a faint; and, to only half-ironic effect, the adolescent Salvatore's first romance is celebrated with a view of the couple running hand in hand through an immense cornfield—and here, as elsewhere, Ennio Morricone's bitter-sweet score contributes substantially to the emotional effect.

More affectingly than did Ettore Scola at the climax of *Splendor*, with its forced invocation of *It's a Wonderful Life*, Tornatore, who is still in his early thirties and here making only his second feature, establishes a Capraesque fantasy of communal existence. The fantasy, though, is not the whole story: hardship and poverty are not glossed over, and the coda makes it evident that material conditions have changed for the better, even though the abandoned Paradiso is about to be bulldozed into a car park.

The elegiac quality lies not so much in the cinema's destruction as in Alfredo's earlier regretful avowal to his departing protégé that 'Life isn't like the movies'. Hearteningly, though, *Cinema Paradiso* itself possesses enough command and self-conviction to demonstrate that movies can still manage to manifest an alternative universe.

TIM PULLEINE

TESTAMENT TO PLURALISM

STORM OVER FOUR

by Jeremy Isaacs
Weidenfeld and Nicolson/
£14.95

Who knows? This might be the last testament to pluralism published in the form of a book of memoirs by a retiring British television executive. There are many forerunners in this genre: Reith's *Broadcasting Over Britain*, Peter Eckersley's *Power Behind the Microphone*, R. S. Lambert's *Ariel and All His Quality*, Hugh Greene's *Third Floor Front*, Grace Wyndham Goldie's *Facing the Nation*.

Allowing for the changes of generation and individual perspective, they all chronicle the evolution of basically the same peculiarly British vision of a cultural pluralism which was to (perhaps did) mend the complicated divisions of this society. They all reveal an incessant struggle between a broadcasting which has long seen its role as being a vehicle for the multitudinous vitality of a nation and, on the other side, a repressive and uncomprehending political elite. All of them are histories of what radio and television have been able to get away with, always against the shadowy, half-delineated, part-accepted backdrop of an indigenous philistine political elite (with half the individuals concerned changing sides).

Jeremy Isaacs' account of the establishment of Channel Four will turn out, I believe, to enjoy a longer shelf life than its predecessors. For one thing, it is the product of a very warm heart and determined spirit; the man who for most of this decade held a whole new channel in his hands, and shouldered the responsibility for the most enlightened experiment in the moving image anywhere in the world at the time, writes in passion and unrecriminatingly to a fault.

The reader wishes to know either more or less about the conflict between him and Edmund Dell (the Channel's first and rather choleric Chairman, whom some remember as being often rather funnier than Isaacs does). One feels a little cheated of details of their final encounters, not out of scandalised prurience but out of a desire to understand what it was they were still scrapping about once the Channel had been proclaimed a major success.

The role of the fourth channel in the last decade before a long-awaited wave of deregulation and contrived competitiveness washes over the broadcasting scene has not yet been given

sufficient emphasis. Channel Four has for some years now helped to sustain an international presence for British culture which we have not previously enjoyed, not this century at any rate. It performs a different role, of course, from the British Council, but its impact is in many places decidedly more powerful. In the year when a single British institution was able to exhibit no fewer than twenty of its productions at the Cannes Film Festival, something important had clearly happened. And something important had also been snottily spurned by a government which continued meanwhile its steady trudge towards establishing in television determined monetary duncedom.

But what was the nature of that sudden multi-communal cultural upsurge which passed through the screens of Channel Four? Who, historically, constituted that gush of independent producers who swarmed through Soho and up Charlotte Street, to fill thousands of hours of television time with utterance and image culled from every rampaging pocket of talent in the country? Were they a new, déclassé, multi-ethnic British 'wave' (a late outcrop perhaps of the student movement of the 1960s) or an accident, an administrative error, as it were, caused by the discovery of a new source of funding? Historians will have to decide whether Channel Four was, in 1981, an accident or a national policy.

Certainly, the advent of Channel Four was a much more generous present from history than anyone directly involved realised at the time, although it was apparent in France and Germany and Canada and India (whither the long arms of the commissioning editors in Charlotte Street finally reached) that something important, even miraculous, was afoot in British arts and British expression generally. Isaacs' account is written in the self-deprecatory, other-praising language of the retiring executive thanking all who worked with him, but the reader who stands back from the gush can see without difficulty the broader implications of the phenomenon he describes. It will be for others to sort out the social-historical strands which were at work.

One should not of course speak of Channel Four in the past tense. The new proposed setup—self-raised advertising revenue, an independent trust, rtc oversight of its finances, preservation of the 'remit'—which is promised for 1993 might be able to maintain much of the Isaacs era, but it is hard to believe that the same verve will remain.

Isaacs was simultaneously constructed by his task as much as it by him; the new organisational forms which are in making throughout the world of British radio and television for the mid-90s are fundamentally the conceptions of politicians to gratify businessmen (and may well fail to achieve that end). Channel Four was constructed by British television people who had seen a glimpse of a hitherto untelevised world. Much of the new talent which Channel Four brought on will survive as entrepreneur-producers in their middle and later careers.

You can dismiss the first decade of Channel Four as a vanity of the intellectuals. I cannot help but believe, however, that vanity is a more creative force than greed.

ANTHONY SMITH

HERE ENDETH THE FUN

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF TELEVISION

edited by Sean Day-Lewis
Grafton Books/£25, (paper)
£12.95

'One day in the death of Television,' a man from Superchannel calls it, and he echoes a knell for British tv which tolls through the pages of this arresting and sobering book. 'Here endeth the fun, the information and the lesson,' laments a BBC music librarian, parodying Lord Reith's elevated vision of broadcasting's role in the age of innocence.

1 November 1988 was an unremarkable day on the box, but it has been made memorable and significant through the 18,000 diaries of viewers and tv folk which provide the material for this snapshot of our television on the verge of profound change. The range of witnesses has the sweep of an Australian miniseries. Alan Whicker sips Krug at 39,000ft over Tashkent, while Mrs Julie Dare from Blackpool notes that her 'viewing of *This Morning* was fortunately interrupted by several trips to the local tip to dispose of a load of rubbish.' A film crew huddles in a pit full of piranha alongside the Amazon; a severely handicapped viewer records his fall in front of the set: 'I lay there listening to the bowls and looking at the wall.'

The perspective shifts ceaselessly as we track through the television day, from routine chaos at *Breakfast Time* to late night exhaustion when even Barry Norman 'can't stay awake long enough to watch myself.' Through the clamour of witnesses and programmes, editor Sean Day-Lewis picks a skilful and compassionate course,

orchestrating the alarms and self-congratulations of the practitioners with the clear-eyed observations of the audience.

'Phoned *Open Air* with a question for Cheryl,' writes a 16-year-old Irish viewer. 'It felt really strange, actually talking down the phone to a star and seeing them look at you from the television and answer the question. I videoed my phone call, of course,' he adds, justifiably enough considering the rarity of real dialogue between television makers and their audiences. It's one of the most engaging features of this book that it regularly brings together the responses of viewers and tv types, and as a long-time toiler in the television trade, I find the outcome both enlightening and uncomfortable.

The book frequently has a deal more mischievous energy than was evident in the interminable television documentary film of the day for all its 76 crews. I relished particularly Day-Lewis' cross-cutting between the hilarious confusions of *Breakfast Time* anchorman Jeremy Paxman, juggling with seals, wet suits, dyslexia, kittens and David Mellor, against the baleful judgment of a viewer: 'Paxman looks like a moose playing Noël Coward.'

The one thing which clearly unites those who make television for a living and their consumers is a passion for the medium. 'I'll go without anything rather than tv,' writes a retired woman. 'If there were no telly, I would go out of my mind, I would scream, I would go mad, very, very mad,' yells a 10-year-old. For the practitioners, there is of course a bonus. 'It still amazes me that I can get paid for enjoying myself this much,' writes a cameraman; but even while confessing their infatuation, the people in the television business can't keep a sombre note out of their diaries. An HTV sound supervisor muses: 'We all love this industry, hate what is happening to it and wonder where it will all end.'

It's always been an obsessive occupation, but the diaries of the television people appear to vibrate with a kind of demented busyness. 'Ulcerville', one producer dubs his job, and the non-stop dash of all those television days seems to express itself in a frantic hunt for a fix of fast food. 'Stupendously ravenous', a researcher moans, gorging at the end of the day on 'egg and chips' and 'disgustingly awful cake'. It's almost as though the threats and pressures beaming down on television are driving them towards a collective crackup. A producer doesn't have a moment to find a house, but devours tv every evening. An electrician

filming a model of the Rift Valley at Elstree is so busy he forgets his own birthday.

But beneath all the dashing around and the torrent of enjoyable anecdotes, *One Day in the Life of Television* resounds with a declaration of concern about the threat to British TV in the deregulated, market-driven, satellite-invaded 1990s. A glitzy gathering at Hampton Court to celebrate British Oscar winners which weaves its way through the diaries of television's top people is described by one reveler as 'Götterdämmerung as far as the TV industry is concerned.' Like some spectator at the decline of the Roman Empire, a hungry stills photographer from Granada cadges a single strawberry.

Elsewhere the mood of the TV makers is universally gloomy. 'Deeply pessimistic that more means worse,' laments Kate Adie. 'Awoke with a black cloud around me,' records Roger Bolton. 'Will these sorts of documentaries survive the White Paper?' One producer detects 'something rotten at the heart of broadcasting,' while another reports: 'Go to bed reflecting there was a time when I relished every single day of working in television; not any longer, I fear.'

On the evidence presented here, the audience are acutely aware of the threat to the quality of their television. As Sean Day-Lewis notes, 'the British viewer does have a firm idea of what constitutes acceptable and trashy television.' 'I feel that it is important to voice my opinion that the output of British Television is at present quite excellent on the whole,' notes one viewer. 'The prospect of evenings such as that of 1 November becoming a thing of the past, due to the plethora of choice soon to be foisted upon us, is saddening.'

Time and again, the audience seem more eloquent than the broadcasters in presenting their opposition to the self-serving tirades of Rupert Murdoch against Public Service television. 'The danger is,' writes a viewer, 'that if television goes the way of newspapers, or goes to all-entertainment like the United States, we won't be able to tell if the country is democratic or not. I hate the alliance of government and advertisers.'

Most dismaying of all for me is the testimony of the people who are propelling us towards this diminished broadcasting future. The politicians are the one group who stand outside that national

community which actually engages with television.

All 650 MPs were invited to keep their diaries of *One Day in the Life of Television*. Just seven completed some kind of response. 'I see about 5 minutes a week,' says Michael Meacher, while others report seeing 'no television at all.' In the end, it's the MP George Robertson who provides the most revealing comment. Observing the Westminster luddites who march with the Red Guards of the enterprise culture on a campaign to dismantle British television, Robertson declares: 'We talk about television, we criticise television... The only thing we don't do is watch television.'

LESLIE WOODHEAD

SAVED BY ROCK 'N' ROLL

SCORSESE ON SCORSESE

edited by David Thompson, Ian Christie
Faber and Faber/£12.99

EMOTION PICTURES Reflections on the Cinema

by Wim Wenders
Faber and Faber/£12.99

Compare and contrast: 'Much of *Taxi Driver* arose from my feeling that movies are really a kind of dream-state, or like taking dope. And the shock of walking out of the theatre into broad daylight can be terrifying. I watch movies all the time and I am very bad at waking up. The film was like that for me—that sense of being almost awake.' And: 'Coming out of the Columbia screening [*Easy Rider*]... I felt in a very odd way as if I was in a film. Not like after a Western, when you come out and light a cigarette and breathe deeply and go back to your car as if you were going from the saloon to the stable; rather as if, after a film that you've seen a lot of times, but which you slept through this time, only waking up occasionally to hear a familiar line or see a familiar close-up, and now suddenly startled by the closed curtains and the general crush, you find yourself on the street again, not awake at all but rather in the middle of a film-dream.'

Both are the confessions of directors whose lives have been so steeped in films that the distinction between the two has disappeared—or that film and life have met and merged in another dimension, a Cocteauish 'zone', a dream-state. The suggestion also of an addiction, of an unhealthy indulgence (Scorsese's 'like taking dope', Wenders' 'film that you've seen a lot of times'), is what puts the sneer into the expression Movie

Brat. But if this is escapism, then it's escapism with a peculiarly purgative, reclamatory motive: what emerges from both books is their subjects' need to re-create and exalt through film the life that is being escaped from.

Redemption is the obvious theme in Scorsese, the promise held out by the director (who once studied for the priesthood) to his heroes, those blind creatures of instinct, environment and obsession. It's less predictable that the more coolly modernist Wenders should invoke Siegfried Kracauer, 'the redemption of physical reality', to describe the moments of grace that he often finds in his favourite genre, the Western: 'the tenderness that cinema can show towards reality.'

Actually, from the occasional pieces on film collected in *Emotion Pictures*, mostly written in the period (1968-71) before his feature-film career got under way, Wenders emerges as the more evangelical. This may be largely due to the one significant difference between the passages quoted above. Scorsese is talking about his own film-making, and the 'broad daylight' into which he steps, blinking, is almost certainly that of Manhattan, even the Lower East Side where he grew up, documentary reality and spiritual imperative being closely conjoined.

For Wenders, the screen world is largely a substitute for the culturally impoverished one of postwar Germany; Kracauer, along with Fritz Lang, is really his only native reference point. The street on to which Wenders is disgorged after a screening is a Western street, and having internalised this imported culture, it's little wonder that he describes his first trip to America, in a prose poem, as the rediscovery of his real life ('My first time in AMERIKA I rode into Manhattan one morning, crack of dawn, on the bus from Kennedy airport. I was HOME').

Wenders' pieces read at times like that seminal case of movie brat-ism—Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, where the real world is only brought fully to life when it's 'confirmed' by the movies. The need to bridge his cultural alienation between Germany and America is what gives Wenders' writing its proselytising drive. It's also what allows a modernist insistence that the truth of films is to be found on their surfaces (where else, since his favourite films were dubbed into German?) to merge with the insistence that this 'truth' has its moral, spiritual dimension, as exemplified by the Western: 'They respected themselves: their characters, their plots, their landscapes, their rules, their freedoms, their

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desires. In their images they spread out a surface that was nothing else but what you could see.' For all the talk of dreams and sleep, in fact, the kind of spiritually blessed cinema that both men are after is also a kind of documentary.

Again the connection is more direct in Scorsese. Of his first feature, *Who's That Knocking at My Door?*, he says, 'It was the first film to show what Italian-Americans really were like,' and his powerfully expressive use of music ('like a grenade, throwing all this music at the audience') also has its realist roots in the old neighbourhood: 'The radio was always on; a juke box would be playing out over the street; and in the tenement areas you'd hear opera from one room, Benny Goodman from another, and rock 'n' roll from downstairs.'

For Wenders, the same music is similarly important, though first of all as spiritual awakening ('in a Velvet Underground song, it said: "Rock 'n' Roll has saved her life. . ." That was undoubtedly true in my case, too'). And 'documentary' also has to be understood in a special sense, as a film which crosses distances; it is 'a science fiction film at the same time', like Godard's *One Plus One*, Altman's *Nashville* or Frank Tashlin's *The Girl Can't Help It*. He despises most rock documentaries, which he believes hate their subjects and hence hate themselves (the worst thing he can say about a film, just like a revivalist preaching the need for love), and films like *Hitler, a Career*, which smuggle in fascist baggage in the guise of 'objectivity'.

If Wenders has to reach furthest for a blessing, it stands to reason that he has furthest to fall. His concluding 30-page prose poem, 'The American Dream', is a record of disillusion in which all the virtues he had found in American films come back to haunt him. If Westerns had entranced him with their generously displayed surfaces, he found, on his first US trip, that 'I'd expected something "behind"; I had looked, but found nothing'; if documentary is exciting when it's 'a film about the future', in America 'It always seems to me that all this testing of future and possible life-forms is happening under pressure: as though the present wasn't bearable without a counterbalancing pressure.' *Emotion Pictures* fulfils its title by giving its occasional pieces an internal as well as an external coherence, a sense of a filmmaker's evolution that is like a second history alongside the cinema on which he is commenting.

Scorsese on Scorsese, by

thoroughly useful and well-annotated interview-history of Scorsese's career, is necessarily lacking that dimension, occasionally pointed up when the editors try to link those moments in the director's professional life when his need for 'redemption' (*The Color of Money*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*) equals his heroes'. Their pictorial annotations are also most revealing when they reach outside film (paintings by Bosch and Antonello da Messina for *Last Temptation*), rather than making 'buffish' connections (*Marnie*, *I Confess*) that never quite connect on page. Together, however, these volumes manage to root that commonest and vaguest of cinema metaphors—the one that compares it to dreams—in two real cinema sensibilities and working lives.

RICHARD COMBS

'WORMS—LETHAL'

THE FILM HANDBOOK

by Geoff Andrew
Longman/£10.95

THE TIME OUT FILM GUIDE

edited by Tom Milne
Longman/£17.95
Penguin/(paper) £9.99

The recent revival of popular interest in cinema in Britain seems only now to be provoking a positive response from the major publishers. Two new books, *The Time Out Film Guide* and *The Film Handbook*, primarily aim to serve the needs of the general viewer rather than the film scholar. Written in accessible, non-academic language, they both provide a stimulating accompaniment to a Saturday night at the pictures, or more likely, in front of the television set.

Rising cinema audiences, proliferating video recorders, ambitious cinema-building schemes, a new film magazine (*Empire*) and television programme (*Saturday Night at the Movies*)—all this seems to indicate the return of a vibrant popular film culture. Yet it is impossible to avoid the awkward question: what kind of films are people really interested in?

The Film Handbook, written by *Time Out*'s film editor Geoff Andrew, is a guide aimed at 'the serious student of film and, more importantly, the ordinary enthusiastic movie-goer', which takes the form of a series of essays on the work of more than 200 directors. Each entry consists of a biographical/critical assessment, together with suggestions for further reading and a select filmography.

For an introductory text, the *Handbook* seems surprisingly

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Faculty of Art & Design, Derbyshire College of Higher Education,
Kedleston Road, Derby DE3 1GB. Tel: Derby (0332) 47181, Ext 1504.

polemical: Andrew is not afraid to try to sway young minds according to his own unpredictable tastes. Fellini's work is written off as 'hyperbolic, naive and incoherent', while De Palma must surely have committed some grave offence to Andrew to deserve the description a 'cynical hack who views both his work and his audience with contempt.' However, the depths of Andrew's spleen are reserved, rather unexpectedly, for Disney, whose 'conservative WASP morality and mawkish sentimentality, resulting often in racial stereotypes, prevented his becoming a profound or truly innovative artist.' The experience of watching *Snow White* will never be quite the same with the knowledge that somewhere in the auditorium Geoff Andrew might be found convulsed with rage.

This approach to Disney indicates one of the more irritating critical clichés into which Andrew occasionally lapses, amid an otherwise thoughtful collection of observations—a readiness to resort to political point-scoring. *The Birth of a Nation* is all too predictably accused of racism, while *Some Like It Hot* is said to have 'suffered from offensive female stereotyping'.

Andrew's favourites are drawn, refreshingly, not from the obvious canonical choices of Welles, Kubrick, Hitchcock, et al, but from the ranks of such British film-makers as Michael Powell, Terence Davies and Derek Jarman. One of the critical positions which underpins the *Handbook* is that the most valuable tradition of British film-making resides in these expressionistic film-makers rather than the realism of David Lean or Richard Attenborough. Davies in particular comes in for praise as 'arguably the most ambitious and most promising director currently working in Britain.'

Andrew's taste is presumably also indicated by the selection of directors for inclusion in the *Handbook*. Few could quibble with the right of most to be represented here, including his rogue's gallery of cult B-movie directors (Joseph H. Lewis, John Brahm, John Farrow). However, there are a number of significant absences, including two of the brightest talents currently working in world cinema—Pedro Almodovar and Spike Lee—as well as arguably more marginal figures like Wes Craven and Raul Ruiz.

The Time Out Film Guide is an appropriate companion to *The*

Film Handbook, carrying reviews of more than 9,000 films culled from the *Time Out* archive. The *Guide's* self-proclaimed mission is to combat the mainstream values of unnamed rival film guides with an eclectic approach emphasising that 'serious cinema and serious artistic intentions do not necessarily go hand in hand.' In addition to recognising the merits of cult movie-making, there is a healthy unwillingness to give priority to English-speaking films over foreign ones, or features over documentaries. Another virtue of the *Guide*, albeit a minor one, is its inclusion of a sector of film-making much ignored by earnest encyclopedists—the sex film.

The main problem, though, is the cumulative effect of twenty years of overheated prose: long on style but short on substance (as *Time Out* might put it), many of the reviews leave one breathless and little better informed. The most disappointing aspect of the *Guide* is the deliberate exclusion of any information about the companies responsible for producing films. This dramatically reduces its potential as a serious reference work, although this is presumably of little concern to the publishers, who seem to have pitched it primarily at home video owners (who will find its detailed listing of video availability useful).

However, the *Guide* does provide an unlikely source of amusement and information in its subject index. Entries range from the obvious—'Hollywood and the movie business in film' to the more obscure—'Desert Dramas', 'Mutation', and 'Worms—lethal'. At its best, this section serves as a useful catalogue of movie clichés, with categories like 'Few months to live stories', 'Family member—long lost' as well as 'Family member—locked away', and, of course—'Fat women, as objects of sexual fascination'. Only a lexicographer of rare wit would come up with a category called 'Love stories (see also—Infidelity)'.

The publication of new film information resources is an event which should, in principle, be welcomed; but neither of these works contributes much in the way of new knowledge. The *Guide* is a clever publishing exercise designed to exploit *Time Out's* archive, while the *Handbook* retreads some familiar directorial anecdotes. Publishers may believe that they will never lose any money underestimating the demands of the British public, but it is hard not to feel that the new audience for cinema deserves something better.

ADAM BARKER

IN THE FRONT ROW

THE GOLDEN SCREEN Fifty Years of Films

by Dilys Powell
Pavilion/£15.95

The *doyenne*, of course; and the absence of any compendium of her *Sunday Times* film columns has long been one of British film publishing's major mysteries. The other *doyenne*, C.A. Lejeune, long ago packaged ten years of *Observer* reviews into *Chestnuts in My Lap*; the wit and wisdom of Graham Greene, Richard Winnington and James Agate have all been prised from the files and banged between hard covers. But from Dilys Powell—the critic with the longest tenure, and probably the most loyal following—nothing.

George Perry's selection from 50 years of reviews—from a 1939 revival of DeMille's *The Sign of the Cross* (her first notice for the *Sunday Times*) to the ubiquitous *Roger Rabbit* (written last Christmas for *Punch*)—does much towards making amends. Handsome amends one cannot say; the publishers have seen fit to use coarse paper, cramped double columns, and allow original printers' gremlins and the odd misspellings like 'Melliès' to sail through untouched. Pieces are not even assigned precise dates: readers must rest content with 'November '53', 'February '64'.

But enough carping. Here is a treasure trove of sagacious judgments on some of the last half-century's best-known films (Perry's selection tends to avoid the unknown, the minor and the forgotten). Blind spots there may be (Bergman, for instance), yet Dilys Powell's overall track-record in singling out excellence and flaws in all manner of product is astonishingly high. Westerns and John Ford are special passions—despite her famous abhorrence of any cruelty to horses. But she also does the decent thing by genres she resists: Biblical films, or syrupy musicals like *The Sound of Music* ('... I wish it well. As long, that is, as I don't have to see it again').

The abrupt put-down, the paragraphs of cacklings at the poor film's expense: these are not part of her armoury. Her opinions stem from unquenchable enthusiasm and kindness; she goes out of her way to praise individual technicians for work well done, and salute emerging talent. (Where, come to think of it, is her notable championship of *Hard Times*, Walter Hill's directorial debut, released in Britain as *The Streetfighter*?)

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Dilys Powell at the party celebrating her fifty years with the *Sunday Times*. Photo: Tony Larkin.

frontline, before film history coalesced into recognised masterpieces, talents and movements. When Dilys Powell saw *Gone With the Wind*, the heavy mantle of 'Hollywood classic' had not yet descended: she could still be frisky, compare sunbaked Atlanta strewn with bodies to 'Bank Holiday on Bournemouth beach', and describe Vivien Leigh's performance as 'extremely clever and well-trained and almost entirely without interest'. Throughout, the reviews bear fascinating witness to hot topics of the day, now long since cooled: the ballyhoo surrounding Lauren Bacall's debut; the emergence of CinemaScope and 3-D, which seemed to herald a revolution to match the talkies; the late-60s spats between Tony Richardson and the critics, which added such gaiety to the nation.

The underlying attitudes of Dilys Powell's reviews equally give witness to their time. The tone is always chatty, unpretentious, courteous: names of directors are prefaced by 'Mr', no matter how ungentlemanly their work. Above all, this is criticism written for a genteel, cultured audience with a strong literary bent. In her early days at the *Sunday Times*, reviewing Goldwyn's *Wuthering Heights*, she went out on a limb; if faced with a film of the book, she proclaimed, expect a film, not the book. Yet she still felt the need to assuage her readers' bias, by pointing out the difference between source and film, or openly declaring that she had not read the novel, even when no one would have expected her to (Jack Schaefer's *Shane*, for instance).

As with many books fashioned from newspaper journalism, there are drawbacks. The ampu-

tation of single reviews from their surrounding text is sometimes severe (one bleeding chunk now begins, 'And so, in its way, is John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*'). Writing tics—inevitable in this trade—begin to grate as the pages mount. But only a mad reviewer like myself would plough through the book like a novel. Best to dip in at will, and savour 50 years of wise, graceful, civilising words from one of cinema's most devoted servants.

GEOFF BROWN

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ADRIAN BURNHAM is a screenwriter and founder member of Build Hollywood . . . PAOLO CHERCHI USAI is assistant curator in the Film Department at George Eastman House, Rochester . . . FORREST S. CIESOL is a former festival programmer and freelance writer in the United States, with a special interest in East European cinema . . . PAUL DRIVER is a writer and music critic, contributing regularly to the *Sunday Times* and the *Financial Times* . . . TERENCE RAFFERTY reviews books and films for the *New Yorker* . . . DAVID RUSSELL is a freelance writer and director, and has contributed to *Movie* . . . LESLIE WOODHEAD is a film-maker (*Disappearing World*, much of the Granada series *Television*, transmitted in 1985).

SIGHT AND SOUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Our thanks to all who returned the sample questionnaires. The winners of the draw will be announced in the April issue.

—EDITOR

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Film Copyright

SIR,—Anthony Smith, barely a year ago, was inveighing in your pages against the way in which the laws of copyright hamstring film and media teaching and research in this country. A recent experience of mine goes to show just how pernicious their effect, combined with the National Film Archive's dependence on producers' goodwill, can be.

I regularly show to students following an option on French cinema a block of three films by Alain Resnais—*L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* plus such as are available of *Hiroshima mon Amour*, *Provvidence* and *Muriel*. I have just discovered that 16mm rights on all the last three have lapsed, and that there are no copies in the Archive. (Anatole Dauman, latterly revered as king of adventurous producers in SIGHT AND SOUND, has actually repatriated the prints of *Hiroshima* to France.)

There are, of course, 'reasons' for this—worn-out existing prints, complications surrounding rights, the need to make resources available for more recent works—but there can be no excuses. No excuses for the fact that major films can literally become unviewable anywhere in this country, overnight. No excuses for obliging those teaching or researching cinema to make do with a fluctuating jigsaw of random archive copies, evanescent 16mm prints, sporadic NFT or repertory screenings, and technically illegal video *samizdats* (in what other medium would scholars have to put up with that?). No excuses, above all, for allowing the profit motive to ride roughshod over the needs of education and scholarship as even now it has not done in the realm of the printed word.

Some sort of deposit system—even a rough-and-ready one such as the requirement to deposit a video copy of any film going out of 16mm distribution, available for bona fide educational and scholarship use only—is urgent-

ly needed to deal with this. Until it is evolved, film studies in Britain will be at the mercy of random commercial interests. I am copying this letter to the Arts Minister, Mr Richard Luce. *A vous deux maintenant!*

Yours faithfully,
KEITH A. READER
London N5

IAN CHRISTIE, head of BFI Distribution, writes:

No one shares Keith Reader's indignation more than I and my colleagues in BFI Distribution, but we are all victims of the vicious circle in Britain whereby no film user really pays enough to justify keeping any but new releases available for rental access (and worryingly the same spiral is now starting in video). With the material cost of making new 16mm prints of foreign films running as high as £3,000 each, quite apart from a token rights payment of, say, £1,000 for five years, it must be obvious that a trickle of £50 rentals amounts to no more than a drop in the ocean.

To be fair, Mr Reader should be grateful that the BFI under Anthony Smith took the bold decision to set up and support Glenbuck Films, without which there would be many fewer 16mm prints available today. But clearly this is not enough, and BFI Distribution is urgently investigating ways of preventing further losses, as well as beginning to redress the balance. Meanwhile, if Mr Reader can find another dozen or so fellow-teachers willing to pledge future bookings of these and any other titles—at realistic rental prices—we will happily try to help.

Great Tradition

SIR,—Julian Petley's article (Autumn 1989) highlights the in-built resistance of most British moviegoers to subtitled films, resulting in the much bigger hurdles which such films have to jump if they are to achieve any sort of distribution in this

country. This no doubt raises wider issues of non-literacy in our society: millions seem incapable of reading anything more taxing than the pornographic comics which nowadays pass for popular newspapers.

It is not just the regular flow of new foreign films which is affected, however, but also what I call the 'great tradition' of world cinema. Some directors are favourably treated, and Channel 4 in particular is to be commended for its recent peak-hour seasons devoted to Tarkovsky and Truffaut, as well as its Bergman and Kurosawa seasons. Other great directors are almost totally neglected, however.

For example, I can recall none of Mizoguchi's films being shown on British television, only one of Ozu's, and only a few of Bresson's. This would not matter so much if their films received regular screenings in the repertory cinemas, but my impression is that there has been a marked shift away from this 'great tradition' in recent years. How many repertory screenings have such masterpieces as *Ugetsu Monogatari* and *Lancelot du Lac* received in the last five years, compared with 'cult' movies like *Blade Runner* and *Repo Man*?

No doubt there are good commercial reasons for this; free-market theory cannot meet the needs of small minorities in this area. This is even more marked in the field of video-cassettes, where the total number of subtitled movies available in Britain can almost literally be counted on the fingers of two hands.

Surprisingly, the situation is far better in the United States, where, according to Leonard Maltin's *Film and Video Guide*, a movie like *Ugetsu Monogatari* is available on video. And everybody knows how well-served are Parisians by 'arthouse' cinemas compared to Londoners. All we can do, it seems, is to appeal to the NFT, the Everyman, C4 and BBC2 to provide more of the 'great tradition' of world cinema, even at the expense of a drop in their income.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN PAVELIN
Chislehurst, Kent

Leeds Festival

SIR,—Julian Petley's 'Where Have the Foreign Films Gone?' made interesting but depressing reading. Further evidence is provided by the Leeds Film Festival which has just ended. By my calculations, 71 feature-length films were shown at the festival, of which only three were not in the English language. A look through the previous year's festival programme gives figures of 110 feature-length films of which 26 were not in the English lan-

guage. The decrease in the proportion of subtitled films is thus from 24 per cent to 4 per cent in one year.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID HOWELL
Leeds

Framework

SIR,—It was with considerable astonishment that I read an article about *Framework* (Autumn 1989) without reference being made to Paul Willemen, the person who more than anyone else has contributed to it being among the foremost film journals in the world. Historical amnesia may be an old condition but is thoroughly unacceptable in a forum such as SIGHT AND SOUND. Rather than individualise the work of *Framework*, perhaps it would be more useful to offer your readers an outline of the journal's pioneering work, especially on Third Cinema.

Yours faithfully,
KEVIN ROCKETT
Ireland

'Framework to Mainframe' was not intended as an article about *Framework*, but about three individuals who had been associated with the magazine. Any history of *Framework* would of course recognise the contribution of Paul Willemen—and of other people, including Sheila Whitaker and, more recently, Jim Pines.—EDITOR

Men of the West

SIR,—In your recent interview with blacklisted screenwriter Ben Maddow (Summer 1989), a misconception occurred which I am writing to correct. In the interview, Mr Maddow mentions ghost writing a novel and script for Philip Yordan titled *Man of the West*. It is clearly implied that this is the 1958 Western starring Gary Cooper and directed by Anthony Mann, which has become something of a classic. As if to back up this claim, a still from Mann's film was printed, retaining the original CinemaScope ratio and looking very impressive indeed.

However, the film Maddow is talking about and the film directed by Mann are two completely different projects. Philip Yordan did write a novel titled *Man of the West*, but the film version of it was called *Gun Glory* and starred Stewart Granger. Since Maddow says he ghosted a novel and script for Yordan, this must be it.

The film directed by Anthony Mann and titled *Man of the West* was scripted by well-known TV writer Reginald Rose and based on the novel *The Border Jumpers* by Will James, a Western pulp writer. I don't blame Maddow or the editors for being confused by all this, but since

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LETTERS

the film has gained an impressive reputation over the years, it's important to keep the facts straight.

Ironically, when *Man of the West* came out in 1958 in the USA, most reviews were somewhat negative, decrying what critics saw as an emphasis on sex and brutality, and admonishing Gary Cooper to go back to his simple, folksy characterisations of yore.

Even director Anthony Mann, in an interview with a certain French film magazine which shall remain nameless, seemed less than enchanted with the results he had achieved in *Man of the West*, bemoaning the fact that he was unable to make certain changes in the screenplay which he felt were important. Over the last thirty years perceptions have changed. Critics as diverse as Robin Wood, Richard Schickel, Ed Buscombe, David Thomson and Jean-Luc Godard have hailed it as one of the best Westerns ever made. For myself, I waver between it and *The Naked Spur* when it comes to Mann's Westerns.

Yours faithfully,
RIC MENELLO
Def Pictures
New York

SIR,—Didn't Ben Maddow mean to reply *The Man from Laramie* in response to Philip Yordan's question, 'Have you got an idea for a Western?' Or was Ben Maddow also ghost-writing for Reginald Rose, the credited screenwriter of *Man of the West*? In view of Ben Maddow's other memory lapses, I think it is important to clarify this issue, especially since the publication of McGilligan's book will otherwise serve to perpetuate the mistake.

Yours faithfully,
PETER BORDONARO
New York

Trolley Song

SIR,—Sorry but J. J. Hunsecker is *wrong*. I have a 'taped off air' video of *Meet Me in St Louis* and I also took the trouble to listen to the 'Trolley Song' sequence. 'Hi, Judy!' is clearly audible and there is a tiny reaction from Garland. With the pre-recording of songs, how it got there is anybody's guess. But it's there sure enough.

Yours faithfully,
KEN HOARE
London N19

P.S.—Did Hunsecker *personally* check the soundtrack or did he leave it to Sidney Falco?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AMBER FILMS for *In Fading Light*.

ANGRA FILMS/FUNDAÇÃO DO CINEMA BRASILEIRO for *Ori*.

ARTIFICIAL EYE for *City of Sadness*.

BEIJING FILM ACADEMY YOUTH FILM STUDIO for *Young Couples*.

CHRISTIAN BLACKWOOD for *Motel*.

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION for photograph of James Ferman.

BUILD HOLLYWOOD for *Rules of Comedy*.

CHANNEL 4/TYNE TEES TV/BFI for *Women in Tropical Places*.

FORREST S. CIESOL for illustrations for 'Khazakhstan Wave'.

COLUMBIA TRI-STAR for *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Casualties of War*.

CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Piravi*.

DAVIDS FILM CO/CHANNEL 4 for *Sophisticated Lady*.

FORMOST FILMS/PALACE PICTURES/BBC TV/TOM COLLINS for *Dancin' Thru the Dark*.

GEMINI FILMS/GPFI/FILMOGRAPH for *The Woman from Rose Hill*.

KINO INTERNATIONAL for *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*.

LENFILM for *Fountain*.

LIVERPOOL FILMS/BBC TV for *The Man from the Pru*.

MOSFILM for *Zero City*.

NFA STILL COLLECTION for *The Third Man*, *North by Northwest*, *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, *A Star Is Born*, *Bad Day at Black*

Rock, photographs of archivists. PALACE PICTURES for *Diva*, *Moon in the Gutter*, *Roselyne et les Lions*, *Mystery Train*, *Cinema Paradiso*.

DAVID ROBINSON for illustrations for 'Evgeni Bauer and the Cinema of Nikolai II'.

THE SUNDAY TIMES for photograph of Dilys Powell.

20TH CENTURY FOX for *Betty Blue*. UIP for *A Dry White Season*.

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ON NOW

█ BLACK RAIN (UIP)

Ridley Scott plugs that overfamiliar cops 'n' robbers scenario, where the hero must track his man to a foreign clime, into the hi-tech, low-rent ambience of *Blade Runner* (Michael Douglas' hardcase cop is down on his luck financially and maritally). Cross-cultural lessons—in Osaka, Douglas picks up some Japanese notions of honour, while opposite number Ken Takakura learns to 'go for it' like one of New York's finest—are drowned in a suet of over-fingered images. (Andy Garcia.)

█ CANDY MOUNTAIN (Recorded Releasing)

Aspiring rock star goes on the road, hoping to earn the break he needs by bringing back alive a fabled dropout guitar-maker. Few surprises in the disenchantment he finds littering the road to pop's candy mountain. Irresistible, nevertheless, as a series of mournfully bizarre encounters staged with a wonderfully witty quirky flair. (Kevin J. O'Connor, Harris Yulin, Tom Waits, Bulle Ogier; directors, Robert Frank, Rudy Wurlitzer.)

█ CAT CHASER (Entertainment)

At last, a flawless adaptation of one of Elmore Leonard's superb thrillers. A cool, racy caper involving love, loot and lots of nasty fringe benefits; set in Florida, with a haunted reminiscence of America's 1965 intervention in the Dominican Republic's affairs providing a teasing moral sounding-board. Script, direction and performances are all terrific. (Peter Weller, Kelly McGillis; director, Abel Ferrara.)

█ COMIC BOOK CONFIDENTIAL (ICA)

A lively documentary, following the comic book from its creation in the 1930s, through waves of superheroism and horror in the 40s and 50s, to the underground of the 60s and the artiness of today. A useful scattershot introduction with plenty of kinetic visuals and appearances by a raft of major figures. (Director, Ron Mann.)

█ DEEPSTAR SIX (Guild)

Plucky submariners are menaced by giant three-lipped prehistoric prawn: a panicking coward, tons of water, a nuclear weapon, thudding direction and inevitably unfavourable comparisons with *The Abyss*. Silly but just about watchable. (Taurean Blacque; director, Sean S. Cunningham.)

█ EAT A BOWL OF TEA

(Artificial Eye)

An agreeable, low-key comedy, scripted by Judith Rascoe, about an arranged marriage in the Chinese community of postwar New York. The period is conjured in loving detail (camera Amir Mokri) and the couple (Russell Wong and Cora Miao) have an unaffected innocence. Intent on reclaiming a portion of lost Chinese-American history, director Wayne Wang stretches a slight story to reinforce his point, that it took the war to make the Chinese full US citizens. Humane, unpretentious and sharply observed round the edges, if somewhat soft in the centre. (Victor Wong, Eric Tsang Chi Wai, Lau Siu Ming.)

█ FELLOW TRAVELLER (BFI)

A blacklisted American writer (Ron Silver) in 50s London tries to script a Robin Hood children's series while coming to terms with the suicide of his movie-star best friend (Hart Bochner). A notable film from the BBC/BFI/ British Screen axis, with telling historical asides, a fresh cinematic approach to the period and some nice bits of metafiction extracted from Bochner's films and Silver's Robin Hood show. (Director, Philip Saville.)

█ GHOSTBUSTERS II (Columbia Tri-Star)

An only slightly altered replay. The Statue of Liberty strides the streets of New York to save Sigourney Weaver's baby from an undead Carpathian tyrant who wants to end the world. (Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis, Rick Moranis; director, Ivan Reitman.)

█ HIDER IN THE HOUSE (Vestron)

Psychopath builds room in Mimi Rogers' attic and becomes obsessed with joining her family. Gary Busey makes an intriguing madman, but matters go on and on. (Director, Matthew Patrick.)

█ HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS

(Warner Bros)

Pinsize kids, zapped by boffin's machine, fight their way across the jungle of a suburban American lawn. Comic adventure with kindly ant and conveniently shaggy dog. (Rick Moranis, Matt Frewer, Kristine Sutherland, Marcia Strassman; director, Joe Johnston.)

█ IN COUNTRY (Warner Bros)

The legacy of Vietnam refracted through the predicament of a small-town Kentucky teenager (Emily Lloyd) whose father died in action before she was born; strong performance by Bruce Willis as the heroine's war-veteran uncle. Fuzzy, but sentimentally well-meaning, from the powerful book by Bobbie Ann Mason. (Director, Norman Jewison.)

█ THE KILL OFF (Palace)

Jim Thompson's novel is

hardboiled down to a grimy imitation of *Blood Simple*, with a collection of ugly characters plotting against each other in a small town where the local bedridden gossip has given everyone a motive for murder. Well acted and possessed of the necessary seediness, this somehow misses the pulpy verve of the original. (Loretta Gross, Andrew Lee Barratt; director, Maggie Greenwald.)

█ LADDER OF SWORDS (Hobo)

Something like a Northumbrian variant on *La Strada*, though with a fantastically happy ending in which a small-time circus artist triumphs over social and matrimonial disadvantage with more than a little help from an enigmatic widow. Evocative camerawork by Thaddeus O'Sullivan. (Martin Shaw, Juliet Stevenson, Eleanor David; director, Norman Hull.)

█ LAST EXIT TO BROOKLYN

(Guild)

Stylised, pumped-up portrait of a corrupt union official and the maelstrom of his sexual life, based on the once-notorious novel by Hubert Selby Jr. Beneath the nastiness and misanthropy, the picture registers as curiously old-fashioned. Seen from the 90s, the 'confusion' of a 50s homosexual, rendered in the stereotypes of the period, is garishly unpersuasive. (Stephen Lang, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Burt Young; director, Uli Edel.)

█ LENINGRAD COWBOYS GO TO AMERICA

(Artificial Eye)

Monty Pythonish joke about a sad-sack Soviet rock group sinking ever deeper into hopeless backwaters as they tour America in a forlorn quest for stardom. Sporadically hilarious, but repetitively hit-or-miss in its humour, and much more likeable in its sad, funny-peculiar perceptions of small-town Americana. (Matti Pellonpää; director, Aki Kaurismäki.)

█ PARENTHOOD (UIP)

Jason Robards presides over sprawling feisty family each bit of which has its clearly labelled problem: an ambitious, more than a little serious, cockle-warming comedy full of dips (a very tiresome black sheep, Tom Hulce) and peaks (grand performances from Dianne Wiest and Mary Steenburgen). (Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, Keanu Reeves, Martha Plimpton; director, Ron Howard.)

█ THE RETURN OF SWAMP THING

(Medusa)

Evil genius Louis Jourdan seeks recipe for immortality in the middle of a Savannah swamp by means liable to give genetic engineering a bad name. Enter vegetation-festooned victim of earlier experiment. Low-budget balderdash with moments of lunatic vitality. (Heather Locklear, Sarah Douglas, Dick Durock; director, Jim Wynorski.)

█ ROSALIE GOES SHOPPING

(Mainline)

In this third collaboration between director Percy Adlon and actress-comedian Marianne Sägebrecht, the law of diminishing returns has regrettably set in. Hefty Frau Sägebrecht presides over an Arkansas family of *You Can't Take It With You*-type eccentrics, and lives beyond her means thanks to credit cards, cheque fraud, computer hacking and plain overspending: sins are confessed to nice priest Judge Reinhold. (Brad Davis.)

█ SCENES FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN BEVERLY HILLS

(Rank)

Paul Bartel's farcical attempt to re-do *Smiles of a Summer Night* or *La Règle du Jeu* in California is more authentically tasteless and alive than Woody Allen's similarly ambitious miniatures. The director's underlying softness, however, undermines what should be a much nastier piece of work. (Ray Sharkey, Robert Beltran, Mary Woronov, Ed Begley Jr.)

█ TWO MOON JUNCTION

(Recorded Releasing)

A would-be erotic story with vacuous Southern belle Sherilyn Fenn distracted from her upper-class life by a shirtless carny barker. Ridiculously tasteful; relentlessly straightfaced. (Burl Ives, Kristy McNichol; director, Zalman King.)

█ UNCLE BUCK (UIP)

John Hughes turns his back on teenagers and presents an anarchic middle-aged tearaway who is given custody of three uptight children and learns responsibility while breaking the kids' prejudices. A heartwarming, surprisingly uneasy anecdote, thanks to spot-on scripting and John Candy's fringe insane hero. (Amy Madigan.)

█ WHEN HARRY MET SALLY ...

(Palace)

Another *thirtysomething* comedy suggesting nothing so much as *Pillow Talk* for the 90s with divorced Billy Crystal and ditched Meg Ryan finally getting round to having a romantic relationship after years of complicated friendship. As written by Nora Ephron and directed by Rob Reiner, a distinct cut above the screwball norm. (Carrie Fisher, Bruno Kirby.)

█ THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE

(Entertainment)

Fumbled attempt to film Joan Aiken's novel in which governess Stephanie Beacham attempts to cheat two precociously well-spoken little girls of their inheritance in imaginary nineteenth-century England. Plenty of melodramatics; smothering overproduction. (Mel Smith, Jane Horrocks; director, Stuart Orme.)

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PHILIP FRENCH, OBSERVER

A FILM BY DENYS ARCAND

JESUS OF MONTREAL

18

"JESUS OF MONTREAL"

refers to the Gospel according to St Mark, advertising for Eau de Cologne,
the Brothers Karamazov, the dubbing of pornographic movies,
the Big Bang, the formula for Coca-Cola Classic,
Hamlet's soliloquy, the inconvenience of being born in Burkina Faso,
a Roman soldier by the name of Pantera, fascists who are daily communicants,
organ transplants and Paul Newman's salad dressing.
In short, it touches on everything that is "unavoidable"(!)

Denys Arcand
Montreal, March 7 1989



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